

TWILIGHT SECTOR

SPACE OPERA¹⁰

BEYOND THE OPEN DOOR



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TRAVELLER

Compatible Product

TWILIGHT SECTOR

Beyond the Open Door

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CONTENTS

Setting up the Campaign:.....3

Using Established Characters:	3
Internal Motivators	3
Four Patrons	3
Rolling up New Characters:	5
Pre-Generated Characters:	5

Part One: Honor Bound.....7

The Story Thus Far	7
Setting: Part One	8
A Slice of Kansas City, Terra	8
Part I, Act One: Breadcrumbs	11
Star of the Plains Offices	12
Bio: Stephan Wiley	14
The Crimescene	14
The KCPD Runaround	16
The Yakuza’s Offer	17
Spring Street Shelter	19
Meeting Rosen	22
Wiley’s Notebook	24
Part I, Act Two: Butchery	29
Investigating the Takara	30
Hardcore Pawn	31
The Yummy Dragon	32
Finding Takeo Batchai:	33
Yamaguchi Take-out	35
After Hours	37
Who are The Takara ?	39
Part I, Act Three: Silk and Blood	41
Bamboo Serenity	42
The Nest	43
Missing Persons	45
The Next Scenario: London Calling	46

Part Two: London Calling47

The Story Thus Far	47
Part II, Act One: Orphans	49
Getting to London	50
Meeting with Mattias	51
Legwork at the Orphanages	57
Orion Security Service (Inside Info)	60
Men in Black	61

Part II, Act Two: Clandestine Affairs	63
Meet Cybil Mar	64
Busting into the Orphanages	66
Strike Team	67
Part II, Act Three: State Secrets	71
Another Meeting	72
Beneath the Surface	73
The Vault Archive	76
Escape!	78
Leaving London	80
The Next Act	80

Part Three: Opening the Door81

The Story Thus Far	81
Part III, Act One: Going to Ground	83
Run now, hide later	84
Location, location, location	87
Path One:	89
Getting there is Half the Fun	89
The Next Step: Preparation is Key	89
Path Two:	90
Rendezvous in Orbit	90
So what exactly was going on?	93
Story Hour	95
King William Island	96
Part III, Act Two & Three: Island Siege	97
The Base	98
Breaking In	99
Special Delivery	100
Finding the Truth	100
Digging Deeper	102
The Precursor Project	103
The Center of it All	104
The Transformation Virus	108

Epilogue 110

Player Inserts 111

Republic of the Plains	112
London	113
Kansas Bureau of Investigations (KBI)	114
Kansas City	115
The Clean Streets Initiative:	116
The Joshua Colony	117
OSS (ORION STATE SECURITY)	119
Cyber Swarm	121
Advanced Disguise Technology	122
Pregenerated Characters	126

SETTING UP THE CAMPAIGN:

Spoilers ahead! Characters should not read any of this material, doing so will compromise their enjoyment of the game.

Referees who want to run *Beyond the Open Door* will have to be able to find a suitable framework to bring characters into the adventure. For characters who are established troubleshooters (or troublemakers) we have a few suggestions to help. This section will also help Referees who are starting fresh and would like to provide some guidance to their players as they generate characters. Finally, there are pre-generated characters on a unique storyline which Referees running their first *Twilight Sector* Setting game or a Convention game might be interested.

USING ESTABLISHED CHARACTERS:

Probably the hardest thing to do with any adventure-book for a setting as wide open as *Twilight Sector* is to come up with an innovative method to involve established characters into the game. Referees must try to integrate motives, personalities and logical connections together in such a way to not only lead players from point A to point B, but to do so in a way that is entertaining. Because there is no one group of players, there is no one way that these encounters will proceed. Hopefully, some of the following ideas can be used by Referees to kickstart the game.

INTERNAL MOTIVATORS

One of the best ways the Referee can get the players involved is to motivate them internally. Have one of the primary players involved with an NPC or situation that touches on this adventure: be it Wiley, Keith, the Yakuza Oyabun or what have you, relate to them in some fashion (by blood or background) to the character of one of your "go to" Players. In any game which has such colorful background generation as **Traveller**, this should be easily done just by glancing at a character sheet:

- ▷ For example, a player who wants to make a journalist or a military character can be a fellow Mutant War Veteran, who knew (even if somewhat distantly) Wiley and Rosen from their days in the War.
- ▷ The character might have lost someone close to them (either as an outright fatality or a missing person) to the Yamaguchi Ripper.

Connections like these will give the players ample reasons to become involved and stay involved. See the Pre-generated characters below for a list of other possibilities.

FOUR PATRONS

One of the simplest ways to get the Players involved is through a patron, the four situations below all feature patrons unique to the adventure. Note that this is slightly different than the more internal motivation discussed earlier. Two of these patron scenarios, *Diogenes Lamp* and *Reece's Request*, have no scenes to base themselves on in the main part of the adventure. Two others however, are related directly to scenes in the First Act of Part One: *A Family of sorts* (connected to **The Star of the Plains**) and *The Yamaguchi Connection* (connected to **The Yakuza's Offer**). Referees may use those scenes as a springboard for the adventure. On the other hand, some Referees will want to come up with their own way to involve the players, and they are encouraged to do if possible. As always, Referees are also encouraged to take individual scenes apart and reorganize them in a manner best suited for their own groups.

Diogenes Lamp

An AI named Diogenes contacts the players, looking for help conducting footwork for an investigation he has mounted into the Yamaguchi Ripper. Diogenes has recently lost someone special to him, a human woman with whom he was having an affair. She was abducted at the same time as another man, a former co-worker of hers named Wiley. Diogenes is not well-suited to running around in the real world nor with an investigation of this type, so he needs someone better suited than he is to interact with human elements and get his investigation back on track.

Setting Up

Diogenes is a very inquisitive AI, and one who genuinely likes humans. Despite that fact that AI have been around in the Twilight Sector Setting for several hundred years, AI/Human relationships are still somewhat rare but they do happen and have since the first AI came online.

In Act Two of the Adventure, Diogenes is still willing to back the players, although there is

As the Harddrive spins...

An interesting sideline to this concept, mentioned in the course of the adventure, is that Diogenes girlfriend Amanda was not faithful to Diogenes, or conversely, that he and she were having an affair behind Wiley's back. Perhaps all three are involved in an even more complicated romantic triangle. Not all players or groups are interested in this sort of melodramatic roleplaying, but it might be an interesting challenge to consider: how would an AI react? What happens when someone like an AI becomes smitten? How do they respond to the final crushing reality? Note, these issues work almost as well when Diogenes is a patron as they do when he is a fellow character (see Pre-Gens)

very little he can effectively do for them other than make and pay for their travel arrangements. He would be more helpful in Act Three, although by this time the situation has gone well above his "pay grade" and in fact he will himself have to relocate on the Grid before the OSS knocks him offline permanently.

Beyond money, Diogenes is also good for assisting the players as a Net Pilot, riding shotgun for them on the Net as they go along. He

might be able to provide some limited assistance to them in this capacity although the Referee should disallow him being able to do every single thing for the players ("Open this door"..."Can he knock out the guard"? or be used as a convenient source of all possible information. He will however, be an excellent source for any infodumps that the Referee needs.

Reese's Request

Another example of a Patron for existing players, especially if those players have already gone through one or more of the *Sominum Mundus* Adventures, is to have KBI's resident genius, Reese, ask the players to look into this issue. Aware that there are several roadblocks in the investigations which are politically flowing from well up the governmental foodchain, Reese understands that traditional KBI personnel will not be able to penetrate the mystery and that the local cops aren't seriously even trying.

During Part Two, Reese will eventually have to go underground if he remains in contact with the

players at all. The OSS will try to work through him as a conduit to get to the Players. In fact, the players may find out later that Reese has been picked up for questioning by the OSS or that he escaped one of their "friendly interdepartmental interrogations" with several electrical burns and a need for a new pinky finger. Either way, any aid the KBI Man can provide to them is probably going to be paltry by Part Three. Still, Reese is a genius, and that alone might make him very useful to the players (and in a metagame sense, a deceased character might also be replaced by Reese to give that Player a chance to continue).

A family of Sorts

The Characters could also be approached by Wiley's editor and friend Gordon Keith Joshua. This works particularly well for 'hired guns'. Joshua is a member of the reclusive Joshua Colony, but considers his employees to be family of a sort. Start the game with the Part One, Act One scene **Star of the Plains** and modify it so that Joshua is hiring them rather than providing information.

Joshua would still be interested in the story as it delves into Part Two, but at the same time the players are being warned off, he is having a discussion with someone from OSS. From that point forward, he will be much more circumspect (although he might try to sneak them some assistance).

The Yakuza Connection

The Yakuza knows all about the Takara and they do not want to become involved directly. They do however want to "get the job done", and one of their major figures – Anjou – is willing to make the supreme sacrifice by speaking with someone about the matter. Because the Yakuza have a variety of information sources, this might even be an individual like the pregenerated characters Lu Chongan or Nelli Drake who have lost someone to the Ripper slayings. It would be an easy proposition to say that prior to the Yakuza involvement, these characters were conducting their own fruitless research (start one off with the basic information in **KCPD Runaround**). Afterwards however, they are pointed in the right direction by Anjou (who may have, for example, set up a meeting with Gordon Keith Joshua on their behalf) and the Yakuza literally get to save the day. How often does that happen?

These four patrons are of course simply examples of the wide variety of options that the Referee has. Taking any one of them will shift some of the encounters in Act One, which is left to the Referee to best determine.

ROLLING UP NEW CHARACTERS:

For Referees who may want to start this adventure with “fresh” characters, there are a few helpful suggestions which might make the adventure go more smoothly:

First, the adventure works best with characters who have a strong moral compass. Hardened criminals and ice-blooded killers will have a harder time justifying why they care about a bunch of kids than ex-Cops. Of course, to be fair it honestly depends on the “hardened killer” and the storytelling challenges an individual player is interested in taking on. Still, something to consider.

Second, “Hooks” can be inserted into players linking them to the adventure by some simple decisions made during character creation. Some of these have been discussed in the Internal Motivation heading above but they are no less apt (indeed, they are more appropriate) with “fresh” PCs.

In addition to establishing two other Connections with other Characters (**Traveller Main Rulebook**, pg. 8, 37) the characters should also have the opportunity to establish connections for one or two additional to the following organizations and NPC characters (**Traveller Main Rulebook**, pg. 40): *Wiley and Rosen* (who are themselves connected), *OSS* (in a neutral or negative way), *KBI* (in peripheral way, Reese from the free adventure *Sominum Mundus* might be a good contact for example), the *AI Diogenes* (if the Referee plans to use him to hire the PCs for the initial investigation) or a *victim* of the “Yamaguchi Ripper” murders.

Referees using the Skill Package rules for their new characters would be advised to pick from: the *Traveller Package* (a solid general package), *Diplomat Package* (useful skill sets, but the characters may be burning some bridges long-term, still a good basis), *Investigator Package* (probably the best one for this adventure, but Referees might want to make a more long-term decision) and ironically the *Criminal Package* (requiring ethical criminals certainly, but an interesting twist on the adventure would be to have people who are already on the other side of the law looking into the deaths/disappearances of some of their friends. The sort of criminal to do so would already be at least somewhat ethical).

A note about Starships: There are a lot of adventures which involve players with ships. This is not one of them. In fact, a ship is something of a detriment in the long run and can be frustrating for a player who has spent a considerable amount of time and resources in the game obtaining one. Best to avoid this complication from the start.

PRE-GENERATED CHARACTERS:

Perfect for a One-Shot or Convention-style game, the Pre-Generated Characters below have the skills which will make them successful in this adventure. Their backgrounds are all optional, not all of them have to be used as written. In fact, Referee’s perhaps may *not* want to use them all of the backgrounds as-written since this would tend to make the group seem a bit too (dare we say) *pregenerated*.

Best to mix one or two of the characters together with their backgrounds listed below intact and strip the others of their background connections altogether: they could be relatives/friends of the involved character, “old army pals” or even hired help.

Nelli Drake: A mutant ROP citizen born to immigrant parents from the Aztec Republic (her name is Nahuatl/Aztec: “truth.”). She is a psionic mutant who has Telepathic and Telekinetic abilities. Her ex-husband was recently killed in a Yamaguchi Ripper-related incident.

Edward Foster: A centennial (113), Foster is a veteran of Law Enforcement offworld that has come to Terra/Sol in order to track down his estranged daughter Amanda, who recently turned up missing along with her boyfriend Stephen Wiley. Foster’s not willing to listen to the platitudes of

Using Mix-and-Match Characters:

Looking over the table, the referee decides to use the Edward Foster and Diogenes characters as written here, not the rest. The two know one another through their mutual connection with Amanda Foster (there may of course be friction on that count, what Daddy wants an AI for a Son-in-Law? (Answer: one who wants his taxes done).

The two other players in the game want to play Baker and Nelli. The Referee decides that Nelli was hired by Diogenes to do some work on the investigation but when things started to heat up and Edward arrived on-planet, they joined together. The Baker character is a friend of Foster’s, who saved his life on Achilles where Foster is now working as a Sheriff in a little Prospector Town.



The Amanda Foster Question

The character Amanda Foster is included in this adventure primarily as another means to involve the players in the plot. This does not make her superfluous however, as she can easily become part of the adventure in a variety of unique ways. But because few of those clues are needed, the Adventure does not detail scenes surrounding her in any great length (her apartment, her workplace etc.). Still, for Referee's interested in making their own stamp on the adventure, Amanda is a good way to accomplish this.

She was a member of the Staff in the Sociology department of the University of Kansas City. While not a faculty member, she had a keen interest in the subject and was working on her Master's degree (this is one of the many different ways she could have met with Diogenes). At the beginning of his investigation, Wiley shared some of the data he collected with Amanda and even later, as he shut himself down regarding her, Amanda kept working on the few clues he gave her. The Referee could connect the characters to the term "Takara" through Amanda, as well as a meeting she had set up with Kannushi-Hiro Fuwa but was unable to keep. They could also discover more about the Clean Streets Initiative and the Yamaguchi Ripper abductions. It was Amanda that led Wiley in this direction, and to the considerably larger pool of prospective victims he was only starting to become aware of when they were captured.

Another interesting suggestion is that Amanda Foster could become a Player's new character if one of them dies in the course of the First Part. All the Referee will have to do is place her alive in the catacombs of the Takara. She will have a burning desire to see justice and after listening to the children crying in the dark, she will be well motivated with the later developments of the case. She has excellent investigative and scholarly skills, and through her father, some basic weapon skills.

the local bumpkins... he wants his little girl and isn't playing any games.

Baker: A simian Uplift, Baker was an old buddy of Wiley in the Mutant War who was simply passing through Terra/Sol on his way to a job opportunity in the Inner portions of the System. Baker only became aware of his friend's disappearance when her read about it in the Star of the Plains and has come down to Terra/Sol to look for answers.

Lu Chongan: A local resident of Kansas City whose brother was found dead in an alleyway and linked to the Yamaguchi Ripper. Chongun is a natural mutant who has checkered past with the local law, but no solid convictions. Lu wants answers, and he is willing to do what he must to get them.

Diogenes: An AI who was involved in a romantic relationship with Amanda Foster. Diogenes is the same character described at length in the *Diogenes Calling Patron* description. Here, the AI is taking a more direct hand in these events as they unfold. He has resigned his position in order to spend more time with the investigation in a more "hands on" fashion.

Statistics and other game details for these characters are at the end of the adventure in sheets that can be copied or printed out separately and handed to the Players. Note that they are devoid of the suggestions listed above.

Referee's may also wish to ditch the background entirely rather than use them as-written: such as making Foster into Wiley's (and thus Rosen's) ex-CEO in the Mutant War or making Nelli Wiley's ex-wife (or daughter or... the list goes on and on. The point is that these are simply suggestions to use as a start, let your own imagination guide you.

PART ONE: HONOR BOUND

Note: None of the information presented in this chapter is common knowledge.

THE STORY THUS FAR

What the Players should know...

A series of mysterious disappearances and brutal slayings has hit the streets of Kansas City, the capital of the Republic of the Plains. These have become known by the somewhat misleading moniker “**Yamaguchi Ripper**” because the first batch of these abductions all happened within Yamaguchi. Another half dozen however have happened since then in the surrounding city districts. Over the past four weeks nearly a dozen people have gone missing and even more have been found gruesomely butchered and dumped (either in whole or in nearly unrecognizable parts) around area waste heaps and other forgotten places: the assaults are fast, with little or no witnesses, and they often leave an orgy of violence in their wake.

The facts of individual cases however vary widely enough to give pause, and some Kancitians have even gone so far as to discount the ‘Yamaguchi Ripper’ entirely. These detractors claim that what is taken as a “pattern” is merely separate examples of normal violence that are bound to occur in cities the size of the Metro Kansas City area. “Gruesome murders happen in crowded cities all the time,” they say, “it doesn’t have to be a conspiracy.”

But there are enough nagging similarities between individual cases that fear has spread into a veritable citywide panic. This panic is actually exacerbated by the paucity of information. There are so few actual eyewitnesses and no video footage of these events has been released by the Kansas City Police Department. Rumors have begun to spread, claiming that mutants are involved (common enough a claim that it is looked at somewhat dubiously), and that there are even more cases that are either unreported or under reported.

Nothing has been discovered that links the victims and no clues as to the identity of the perpetrator have been uncovered by the authorities, who remain very tight-lipped about the situation. Even the underworld is on edge, as they, too, are uncertain who is responsible for these crimes.

...Behind the Scenes

The true situation is, if anything, even more horrific. Unbeknownst to the citizens of Kansas City, a terrible evil lurks just beneath the surface of daily life, feeding off the lives of the innocent. For over a century, a loathsome cult of cannibals calling themselves *Takara* have moved through the population of Terra/Sol, living normal lives and blending in with those around them. Though the occasional member drifts too far into public view, leading to the discovery of ‘serial killers’ and ‘psychopaths’, few suspect them of the atrocities they commit on an almost daily basis.

In Kansas City, a large group of *Takara* established themselves some time ago and quietly conducted their terrible rites in secrecy. Preying upon transients, the destitute, and others that have long since been discarded by civilized society, the *Takara* have thus remained undetected. However, a new public policy was established two months ago proposing to ‘clean up the streets of Kansas City’. The policy removed much of the *Takara*’s source of victims. This has caused the group to become bolder and they have begun taking greater risks by kidnapping people off the street and from their homes.

The Invasions appear so random because they *are* random. The *Takara* are taking targets of opportunity, using multiple teams of “hunters” that stalk for stragglers and anyone else easily ‘culled from the herd’. A serial killer generally has a pattern, and while they may well be crazy that pattern is defined by some internal logic. The *Takara* hunting parties are far more atavistic and thus harder to unravel.

The disappearances and the murders, combined with the inability of police to gain any headway in the case, led a crusading journalist by the name of Stephen Wiley to do some investigating of his own. With skill and determination, Stephen was able to pick up some leads that unfortunately also drew the attention of the *Takara*. Very quickly, Stephen disappeared along with his notes, becoming a part of the case himself.

SETTING: PART ONE

Before Reading the Following, Referees who have not already, should familiarize themselves with the Setting Information sheets found in the Player Insert Section: “Republic of the Plains” and “Kansas City”

▲ SLICE OF KANSAS CITY, TERRA

One of the most important NPCs in Act One isn't either human or AI or Uplifted goat, but the megacity itself. Like any NPC, the city has a distinctive description, internal motivations and external behaviors, as well as a “dialogue” all its own. Referees may want to ensure that this sense of place is injected into their adventures, both as a way of giving the players a sense of place and to distinguish Kansas City from other locations.

Physicality:

This is a city of extremes, juxtapositions of the old and the new, the immense and the humble. There is always a skyline off in the distance in Kansas City. For a place built on a plain, it has over the years created its own hills and valleys.

Portions of Kansas City look like they could be from any major metropolis on Old Earth in the early 21st century: crisscrossed surface streets packed with vehicles, sidewalks jammed with people, tall skyscrapers and low-rise buildings in a testament to man's harnessing of his environment. This is however not reflective of all of the city. Indeed, this only stands true of the most conservative components of the city, such as the Downtown area, which fights to retain its distinctive flavor and “old world charm” despite the press of humanity all around.

Most of the city however cannot afford that luxury. While the plains stretch for hundreds of miles, the city designers for Kansas City consciously fought against sprawl as the population of the area began to mount with flood upon flood of humanity looking to live on this “other Earth”. In some other population centers, the Sprawl is enormous, as is the ecological impact which has caused those cities a major environmental and health problem. Kansas City, using zoning laws and rather draconian environmental regulations “encouraged” the city to grow in a different direction. Although to be more accurate, this should be thought of as a number of different directions: namely the arcology and the Hive or Undercity/overcity.

There are several arcologies springing from the firmament of the metropolis. Some of these are half-arcology half-normal city, while others have become true arcologies – whole cities inside of single massive structures. What they share is the idea of conservation of space, innovation of design and integration of multiple uses to maximize efficiency and better distribute resources. Roark Tower is one example used in this adventure, almost a work of art this wing-like structure rises out of the city and houses almost a quarter million inhabitants alone (over 1% of the total city population). And Roark Tower is considered small by arcology standards.

And then there are the Hives or layered sections of the city. These portions of the megacity have literally been built one over the other in layers. Using high-tech materials designed for superstructures like Beanstalks, older industrial and residential sections of the city have become the base of a second layer of urbanized development, retaining both the upper (Overcity) and lower (Undercity) portions intact. In some cases, two and three layers have been constructed over top of one another in places, creating a hill-like areas which look like somewhat hives when viewed from in cross-section (thus the common name).

The inside of these Hives, specifically the undercity portions, have become strange hothouses or urban living. Make no mistake however, not all of these sections have been turned over to criminals and vagrants, several undercities boast upper-middle class neighborhoods along with Low and middle class areas. These are however places of perpetual night, or at best twilight, as the sun pokes around the edges of the artificial canyons of steel and carbon nanotubes. Nor are these places that indeed *can* be avoided. As the megacities grew and population pressures rose higher and higher while sprawls were consciously nipped off, these Hives (as well as the Arcologies) became the answer. Some 40-50% of the city are estimated to live in these areas. While some of them are terrible places of desperation and darkness, others

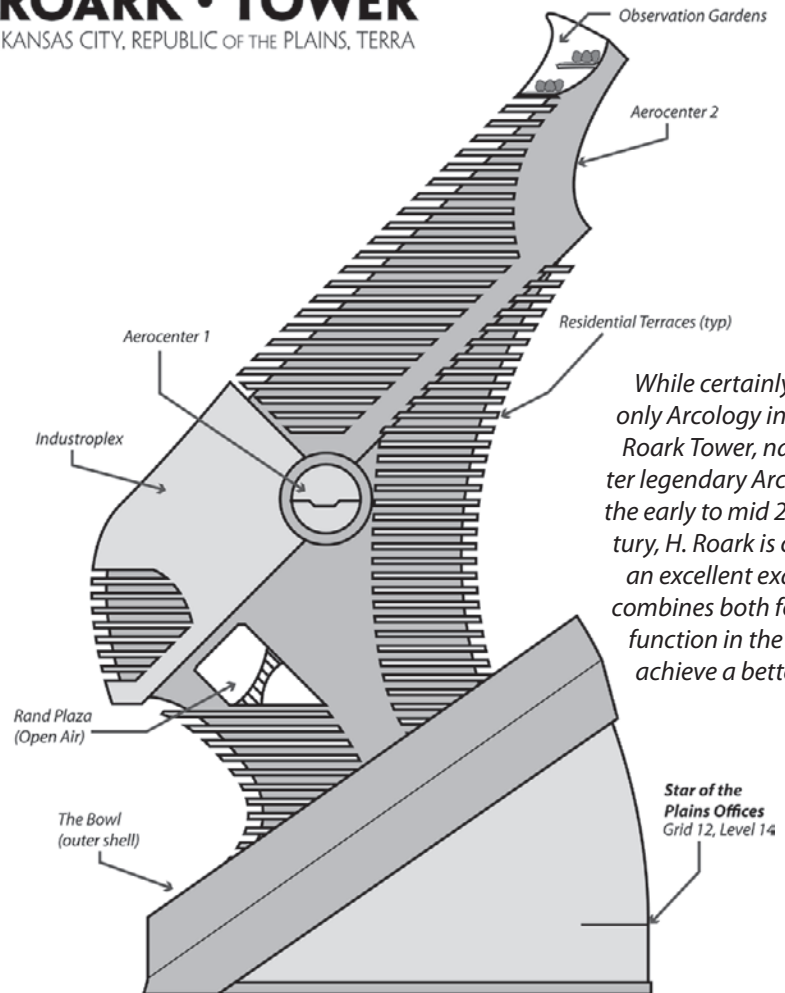
are welcoming and homey. The neighborhoods of the undercities tend to reflect the collective personality of those who live and frequent them.

Personality:

The residents of Kansas City call themselves *Kancitians* (CAN-city-ANZ) (similar to their 20th century forebears who considered themselves 'Kansas citians'). The Kancitians tend to be proud, hardworking and somewhat focused. While these are certainly both overgeneralizations if not stereotypes, the perception of Kancitians is rooted in fact.

Referees may want to play this up: Kancitians that the players encounter move fast, talk fast and get things done. The crowds here do not just loiter or mill about randomly. They surge, they act like great human streams that go someplace. There are to be sure some eddies and ripcurrents, but the mass of them have somewhere to be and the players either go along with them or have to fight against that tide.

ROARK • TOWER
KANSAS CITY, REPUBLIC OF THE PLAINS, TERRA



While certainly not the only Arcology in the city, Roark Tower, named after legendary Architect of the early to mid 20th century, H. Roark is certainly an excellent example. It combines both form and function in the quest to achieve a better future

Tolle Lege

While every effort has gone into making this a complete campaign sourcebook, there are a number of areas which have deliberately been left blank for individual Referees to expand, explore or ignore as they wish. Like any roleplaying supplement, this adventure is best when you use it to stimulate your own imagination, adding your own ideas to it to make the whole better. These "blank areas" are just one method of allowing individual Referees that space, and while it certainly is not the only method, it deserves some special mention.

Some of these "blank areas" have been spelled out in no uncertain terms, these are intended to serve as an example of the type as a whole, with some potentials presented for your consideration. A good example of this is the Amanda Foster material found in a sidebar in the Setting Chapter. Her story could be as compelling as any of the other Non-Player Character's in the Campaign, she could easily replace Wiley as a major source of critical information and other sidebars like those dealing with her relationship to Diogenes give further possibilities.

But not all ideas can have as much space devoted to them: such as Johnny Ito from Part One. He could be a critical link between the notes and the true lair of the Takara (The Yummy Dragon might just be one of many steps to reach the Nest). The Players could spend a whole night chasing after him as he tries to evade them and the Takara. Similarly, in Part Two, the story of Revanché is completely left out. What can the players find of this contract killer on the grid, this pale imitation of the "Ghost in the Machine"? Such a search could create an excellent "B-Plot" for the middle scenario. Again, these are some of the more straightforward examples. Hopefully, they provide ample room for the Referee to tailor this book to their own style and their own version of the Campaign. Have at it!



PART I, ACT ONE: BREADCRUMBS

In the opening scene, the players attempt to track down Stephen Wiley's notes in the slums of Kansas City. But first, they have to know where to look.

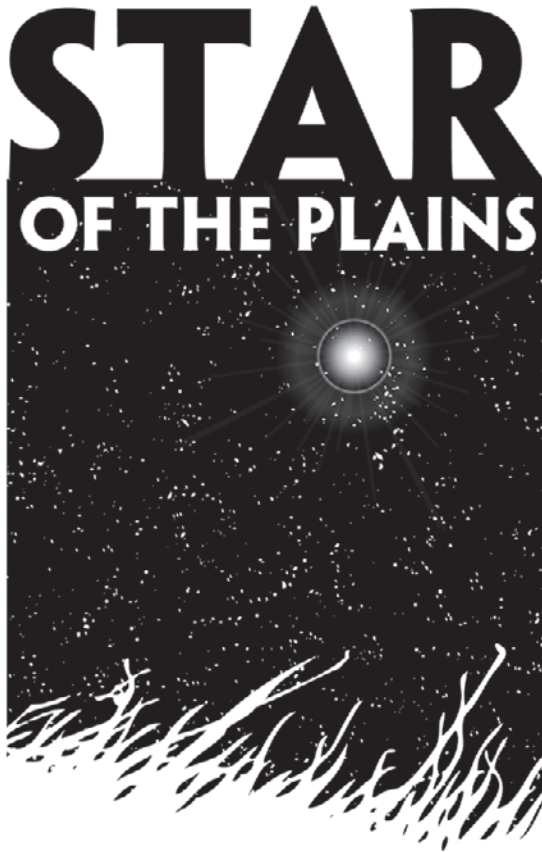
Using these encounters

The objective for first act of the adventure is to end with the players obtaining the Wiley notes from Rosen. He had the most complete information available, compiled with the eye of a seasoned journalist.

For Referees looking for the simplest, most direct method (or the fastest for Convention-style play where everything must be accomplished within a single tight session), use the following: **The Star of the Plains** (directed by their patron or the story of Wiley having been abducted) > **Mean Streets** (to provide a little action) > **Spring Street/Interactions with Rosen** (to get the Notes) > **The Notebook** (an information dump that leads directly into Scene Two).

In another option, if the players are approached first by Kyle Reece of the KBI who serves as their patron (see Reece's Request in Setting up the Campaign), they might be issued some official documentation and sent to **Wiley's Apartment** (for background data) > **The KCPD Runaround** (as a nod to the local law and "interagency courtesy") > and then finally to **The Star of the Plains** (to look into the background. Leave out the last quote from Keith – which is the most direct way to send the PCs to Rosen – as the PCs should be able to make the connection between the two old army buddies and the Notes given the photos in his apartment) > this could be followed by **The Yakuza's Offer** (to give them more information about who they are up against as the Yakuza try to use the players to defeat the Takara) then > **Spring Street/Interactions with Rosen** (to get the Notes) > **The Notebook** (an information dump that leads directly into Act Two). This results in a longer adventure, but gives the players a more complete picture of the problems facing them.

It hardly needs to be added that these are not the only choices for Referees, (we even discuss some other possibilities from time to time, such as the Amanda Foster character sidebar in *Setting* above). It should also be noted that the first few scenes (**Star of the Plains**, **Wiley's Apartment**, **KCPD Runaround** and **Yakuza's Offer**) are presented in no particular order. Which scenes play out first will be a matter for individual Referees to determine based on their own story needs.



STAR OF THE PLAINS OFFICES

With some minor adaptations, the following encounter could be used as a Patron encounter; with the Editor hiring the Players to look into this matter. He could give them some or all of the information below in discreet parcels, as they report back, or all at once as written; the Referee must pace as they need to fit the time they have available. For example, the Players might be sent to the apartment first, find the photos and ask the editor about the man (Rosen) in them. The Editor will identify Rosen and has the information that will send the players to him.

Getting there

The *Star of the Plains* is located in the almost-completed Roark Tower, an arcology located in the downtown area. Because of its location in the arcology, the *Star's* offices are not so much a "building" as they are a location or section within the larger structure.

Getting to the arcology itself is the first step:

Description:

The Roark Tower is a majestic structure that rests on the banks of the Missouri River, and

rises up hundreds of meters tall, forming a graceful wing-shape that has already given the Downtown Zone a unique skyline.

For Referees who want to add some "color" to their descriptions, the main offices of the *Star of the Plains* are located in Grid 12 of Roark Tower, on the eastern half of the building on levels 12-14. It is accessed by taking some of the slideways inside of the Tower to a bank of elevators in Grid 4 at the eastern edge of the structure and upwards from there in some of the many elevators located in that section. There, they must backtrack slightly and take slideways to the main entrance of the Star Offices. Use description to make the place vibrant, alive, interesting and science fictional.

Description:

The inside of the arcology is almost as beautiful and awe-inspiring as the outside, filled to capacity with residential, commercial, and even industrial units. The Star of the Plains for example has a smartsign operation (the vast billboard sized advertisements scattered around the city) on Level 14.

There is also a burgeoning population that provides a vibrant hustle and bustle here. People of all walks of life and all stations are constantly on the go. The Thoroughfares (their major hallways) are always filled and there are open spaces for people to gather, sit and talk with one another. The air is alive with robots of every shape, design and color. They too live in this space and give it a unique flavor.

The *Star* takes up almost the entirety of Grid 12, so as the players zoom along the slideways to the main entrance, they will be passing by many of the offices which have windows facing out over the arcology's mass-transit network.

Eventually, they reach the Public Access Portal (aka "front lobby").

Description:

The front lobby is bustling with activity, with a lot of high end robots in evidence [Referee Note: Players who might be interested will actually know that some are 'Automatons', but only among Robosnobs. The reason for the difference will be apparent when they meet the Editor.].

*A well-dressed and attractive female Biocon greets the players as they approach the front desk: "Welcome to the Star of the Plains. May I help you?" Her eyes are only slightly glassy. The model itself is a **Karen**, one of the types used mostly in Executive Assistant positions.*

If the Editor (he likes to go by “Keith”) is expecting the players, they have but to announce themselves and they will be whisked inside to the room described below. Otherwise, there is a string of people they will need to talk to first. Referees can ad lib these tedious encounters or just inform the players that they go through a montage of very pleasant and annoying folks before something sinks in and they are taken to see the one they came to see. Players with some credentials (government, KBI, even the backing of the Yakuza) will get there faster, but eventually the Characters are whisked into a plush meeting area.

Description: *The players are taken to an impressive room with a conference style table and comfortable seating. The series of windows facing the lobby slowly opaque once they are all seated. Then a Hologreen pops up in the center of the now (slightly) darkened room. In the glow of the Hologreen a figure appears, obviously in zero (or at least very low)-gravity. A space station floats against a sea of stars behind his head.*

*The figure is a Joshua, as in one of the Joshua clone family (direct interested players to the **Joshua Colony** insert). He is a handsome man, as they all are, and smiles in a manner you can tell is professionally polished (but not insincere necessarily).*

“Welcome [ladies/gentlemen/sentients as appropriate], I’m Gordon Keith Joshua. Please though, call me Keith.” He gives you another one of those dazzling Joshua smiles. “I’ve been told that you are looking for information about one of my employees.”

Dialogue:

Keith is able to provide a good deal of information about his employee, and can give them brief details on the case. The following are examples of the kind of dialogue “Keith” might use.

- "Yes, Wiley is one of my employees, and I don't let one of my employees get treated that way."
- "He was abducted right from his own conapt, not fourteen blocks from outside of this arcology, which is enough for the police to claim that this isn't one of the Yamaguchi Ripper. But we know better don't we? When a man who is investigating these events gets snatched in almost the exact same fashion as the other Ripper victims, you know he got too close and they took him to shut him up."
- *If the Referee decides to use Keith as a Patron add the following immediately afterward:* "Wiley wasn't going to shut up voluntarily,



Gordon Keith Joshua, or “Keith”, Editor of the Star of the Plains

and I’m not going to let someone else make the decision for him. But I’m also not going to squander my resources. I have plenty of other reporters who would give their eyeteeth to get onto this, but I need someone like you, someone that isn’t going to end up the same way.”

- "I'm also worried about his girlfriend, Amanda Foster. She's a nice girl, worked for a while as a researcher for us before she went on to the university. She was kidnapped at the same time."

Keith also can tell the players that Wiley often made use of a source named Rosen who is a vagrant now residing in the Spring Street Shelter.

[Referee Note: this is one of the most direct ways for the players to be directed to Rosen and thus Wiley’s notes. Use carefully unless you want to make Act I short]

Dialogue Coach:

Like some of the other examples of dialogue found in the adventure, Referees do not have to use these exact passages. Do however keep in mind that some of this dialogue might contain clues Referees may want to incorporate elsewhere, either in another format or using another character.



BIO: STEPHAN WILEY

The ace investigative reporter of the Star of the Plains, Stephen Wiley has had a varied and distinguished career. Born in 2950, Wiley's parents were immigrants to the Terra/Sol system, originally settling on Achilles where his father served as an Engineer on the massive gravity inductor being used there for terraforming.

Wiley entered the military in 2968, against the wishes of his parents, and became part of Terra's 144th Fusiliers, a light infantry unit that performed work all along the Crescent Sector during the War. It was as a member of the Fusiliers that Wiley met Jan Rosen and the Simian Uplift Baker. Receiving a field commission in 2972, Stephen nevertheless maintained a close relationship with his former non-commissioned comrades throughout his service.

During a particularly nasty engagement in 2980, Stephen was wounded by one of the APR's "experimental weapons". His injuries ultimately required the biological replacement of both eyes (cybernetics would not take), but also damaged his nerve endings such that he could not bear intense light. Since then, Stephen became known by the wraparound sun visor, only taking it off at night and for dramatic effect.

Wiley was hired by Gordon Keith Joshua himself at the Star of the Plains, first as a way to get back on the battlefield as a War Correspondent, but later embracing his role as an Investigative Reporter. He has since become the terror of Kansas City officials.

- *About Rosen:* "The two fought in the war together, old buddies that got separated. Wiley went up, Rosen down. Way down."
- "Rosen gives Wiley information from time to time, street angle stuff you know? Wiley may have contacted him during his investigation of this case. Stands to reason, there was some kind of street angle Wiley had latched onto a week or so ago. That was about when he stopped filing regular reports. Turned up missing the next day, then the story came out about his abduction."

[Referee Note: this behavior, going to ground as it were, is not something unusual for Wiley. If asked, Keith is very open about how his star reporter can get so fully immersed in a story that he loses all touch. He describes the reporter as "intense"].

- "Rosen lives at the Spring Street Shelter, he's one of their new 'residents' if you catch my drift. Wiley did a story about the Shelter when his friend went in, but Rosen is a stubborn bastard; one of those self-destructive types from what Wiley says."
- "My guess is that Rosen might know something, if not what Wiley knows than at least what he doesn't know..." **[Referee's Note:** this is the most direct means to send the PCs to Rosen]

THE CRIMESCENE

Wiley lives in a decent section of town, in a building with decent security. In addition to being his residence, this is also a place of interest because it is where he was abducted.

Exterior

If the Players decide to track down Wiley's apartment, it is easy enough to locate. Privacy laws in the Confederation are moderately strict, but telephone directories are not technical violations of the law, even those that list "unlisted" addresses. Wiley's is 19724 Liberty Avenue, Apt 83.

Description: *Paxton Place is a tall blue-steel Conapt (which stands for Condo/Apartment, a term used for both the living unit and the building) at the edge of Liberty Plaza, part of the Downtown Zone (and thus not far from the offices of the Star of the Plains offices). It is well-maintained and quite impressive as such buildings go, although it has been dwarfed by the great arcologies that are beginning to rise all around the city and constantly threatened to be swallow up as layer after layer is built in the surrounding zones.*

The front of the building has an elegant lobby, which is designed to be a show of "old money" and "taste" above cutting edge style and technology. They employ real human doormen, in long buttoned coats at all times (refrigerated in the hot months thankfully) with a peaked hat that features the conapt's stylized logo. They greet all visitors with "Good (morning/afternoon/evening as needed)" and request if they can be of service, particularly when the individual they are greeting is not one of the two-hundred residents of the Conapt or a semi regular visitor.

Eyewitness

The case of Stephen Wiley is unusual in that it has an actual eyewitness, although only a partial eyewitness. Pete Veskilaros is the Night Doorman of the conapt, and he saw Wiley (and Amanda Foster if the Referee is using her for a springboard to the adventure as well) being taken away by several men. This is where it gets a bit vague. According to the police reports as well as the report in the *Star of the Plains* and other news outlets, he witnessed the two being pushed into a waiting car by two "mutant types". Reporting also noted that the car Veskilaros identified was stolen earlier that evening and later found abandoned in the river, where the rushing water and general contamination made it a useless as a piece of evidence even with 30th century technology.

Because Veskilaros is the night doorman of the conapt, he is unlikely to be at the building in the daytime. He can be found in one of the local area pubs though both before and after his shifts, not so much drinking and soaking in the atmosphere of the downtown Zone rather than return to his tiny bolthole apartment in Mission Hills. Most of the other doormen know of his haunts and would be happy to point the PCs in that direction if they don't seem like creeps.

Description:

Veskilaros is a tall man, slightly gangly, with a broad smile and a jaunty, breezy manner. He will either be dressed in his formal work clothing or in casual but stylish clothing.

Veskilaros willing to talk, practically to anyone willing to listen to his tale, and he readily gives a full account of the situation. Although he may also ask that they come back later or during his boss's break-time if he's on duty. The information has been already been made public, but the Conapt Manager doesn't like the parts of his story that reflect a lack of security. "Bad for the building, ya know?" as Veskilaros himself says. Unfortunately,

for all his readiness to open up, Veskilaros actually has very little to add to the general details reported already (noted above). Some of what Veskilaros has to say might include:

- "These weren't any normal mutants," (he glances at any mutants there), no SIM or even... uh, Emerged that I ever seen. Definitely no Orc, although one guy was as big if not bigger. They wore cheap suits, looked... funny. Weird you know.
- "The Cops said they swept the area with DNA scanners and all, but got nothing. I don't know how, these guys weren't in vacc suits or nothing..."
- "The Car? Cops said they found it floating down the river next day. Stolen."
- (For games which have the Amanda Foster character:) "Miss Amanda. Nice gal, stays there sometimes you know. I let her up just before Mr. Wiley got home. Should have seen his face when I told him." He may blanch slightly if someone close to her is present. "Never any trouble from Miss Amanda. Nice manners. Sweet girl, sweet couple really."
- There was one thing. I told the Cops about it but they didn't know anything about it. I didn't see it in any of the news reports either, so they must have dismissed it right? What? Oh, yeah... Miss Foster said something when she saw me coming over. Tak. Takra. Tara. [*he pauses a moment*] Takara. That was it. Takara.

He has no idea what that means. It appears in the confidential police records as "garbled statement reported by witness." (see Page 30 if the Player tries to look this name name up)

The Apartment

If the Characters want to examine the apartment, they will have to break in, since it is a sealed crime scene. To break through the Police slap-lock. Make an *Electronics (Intelligence or Education, -1, 1-6 minutes)* or a *Deception (Intelligence, -2, 10-60 Seconds)* check to disengage the Police slap-on magbolt lock: If they **fail**, the System lets off a silent alarm to the local station and police will arrive in 2d6 minutes to investigate. If they only **Marginally Succeed**, the players will still trip the alarm, but they will also be aware of it and thus know they have little time.

Description:

Wiley was a man on the go a lot, and his apartment reflect this. It is spartan without being actually bare. It's also upscale as these things go, definitely no cubicle but no penthouse in the sky either.

Part One: Honor Bound

The violence of the scene is unfortunately also evident. His furnishings have been upset, obviously in the tussle when he was taken, but the place has been cleaned out already for most Forensic analysis. Either by the KCPD or a herd of Mammoths.

No real hard evidence remains in the by eye or scanner however, some inept investigating and a professional snatch job coming together. Referees that have not started with the Editor at the *Star of the Plains* have plenty here to remind the PCs to look Gordon Keith Joshua up – from the various memos and other corporate paperwork that Wiley has around the place to his framed award-winning story.

Investigate (Education, +1, 1-6 minutes) or Recon (Intelligence, +0, 1-6 minutes): There are relatively few pictures on the walls, or anywhere else in the apartment for a man that makes his living in the media. There is however nothing to indicate that pre-existing photos have been taken away however (shadows on the wall and other telltale marks which are the classics of mystery fiction).

Description:

Of the few images that there are, they are all old-style flat prints and they tend to be of the same three people photographed in different parts of the city, usually city parks and other local monuments.

The figures in the photos are: Stephen Wiley himself, a blonde woman (Amanda Foster) and another man who appears (according to the dates on the back) to be in increasingly worse shape as the images progress.

[Referee Note: this is Rosen, but as he is so far off the grid, his name will be more difficult to find without talking to some of Wiley's other friends. If one of the players has a history in common with the men however, they will recognize him, but only after a moment. They are also concerned.]

Other Details from the Complex:

There is precious little in the apartment for such a large well-run place. The abduction was late at night, and the many murders which have taken place as part of the Assaults were other eyewitnesses. The doorman is actually one of the rare few and might himself one day come up missing if the problem persists. Interviews with neighbors get nothing solid either. Someone heard a scuffle and called downstairs to complain, which was why Vaskilaros the doorman noticed them leaving the back way in the first place.

THE KCPD RUNAROUND

If the players have some official capacity with the government or police (members of KBI or working for members of KBI for example) talking to the Police Department should be relatively easy in theory.

In practice however, the Characters will have some difficulty in getting in to speak to the right person. The characters will quickly become aware that they are being given the runaround. This activity is so blatant that no skill check is required.

As they get shuffled between offices and an endless stream of bureaucratic zombies and Public Relations sycophants, the Characters can possibly get some details along the outer edges however. The Referee should roll the check *Admin (Intelligence or Education, +0)* for each (frankly pathetic) round of "pass-the-problem" the players are willing to withstand beyond the first. An extraordinary success should get 2 or more of the tidbits. Each round takes roughly an hour of the Character's time. These details are, in order:

- ▷ The Police are obviously baffled. They would not be tying so hard to stiff-arm questions unless they had very little data themselves. (free, for anyone with Admin, still takes an hour to distinguish from normal inefficiency)
- ▷ Beyond this fact however, some details surface: Including the fact that all of the analysis done at the scene of the attack (any of the attacks indeed) concerning the DNA of the attackers (skin samples that were not otherwise identified et al) have come back from the lab as "anomalous results." Help has been requested from Confederation labs, but officials there have been slow to respond. No indication they have even tried on paper.
- ▷ There is an embarrassing fact that emerges as well: the much touted sophisticated camera systems scattered all over the city, even those on freely moving remotes and drones, located inside of the areas where the attacks occur are mysteriously 'blacked out' during every single attack.
- ▷ Furthermore, there is a section of the city – Yamaguchi – which has spotty camera feedback at all times. This has become worse as the abduction situation has developed. The difference however is that while the normal video outages in the District have no patten, cropping up randomly. Those outages that coincide with the outages at the locations where the abductions are taking place

however are total, blacking out the entire District.

- ▷ There is a rather disturbing sense of fear in those nominally in charge of the investigation and the officials above them. Something has warned them off the case or made them very upset about pursuing it.

In the extraordinary (or maybe not) event that the Players confront (or kidnap) officials 'in the know' they are given the following description, which the Referee can adapt to whatever character and whatever event they need (since, this is someone that the players are choosing on their own the Referee will have to just wing the descriptions). The following could also come up if the Referee wants to use the Police to bypass some of the other optional scenes in this section of the adventure, or if the player has a good contact of ally in the KCPD:

- "Look, everybody wants this to be wrapped up. Publicly. And we are taking the heat for it. Publicly. But every time we make a step forward, we got a lot of pushback from the boys up stairs. Way up stairs. Look, I don't know what's going on, but I don't know that I want to know if you take my meaning."
- *On Pressure:* "Who? Who isn't? I get reports that are marked Code 3 Confidential to lay off certain aspects of the case – like the Yamaguchi video feed problem. That came straight from the offices of the Confederation Governor's Special Task Force."
[Referee Note: Chasing down this lead sends them straight into the rabbit hole. The person who sent it doesn't acknowledge having sent it or seen anything from the Kansas City Police Department. Then the Players will also be "officially dissuaded" from asking too many questions. Punishment for raising their profile in what they should by now understand is a delicate, high stakes political situation.]
- *On Evidence:* "Our labs turn over nothing, so I send them out to the Colonial Government's Labs. They said there was nothing they could detect. So I have a friend in OSS who I send it to. An hour after the request was made, they said there was nothing they could detect. Of course, they almost certainly didn't have the samples in hand yet right? Then another hour later, I get an order from an OSS director. They informed me that I needed to send all of the samples – all of them mind you – up to the Labs. They made me *personally* sign them out. Not some flunky, not some tech. Me."

If the players press further, and the Referee feels it is a good idea at this point in the pacing of the adventure, the players can get their hands on the actual report from the local cops. It is not particularly helpful, but a few details do stand out that even Wiley manages to miss in his otherwise copious notes (have to have something to reward the players with for chasing down this lead after all). The DNA results are to put it mildly: weird beyond compare, it isn't remotely human and has a makeup that gave the testing program fits. But there are some other details as well, a range of complex carbohydrates and sugars taken from touched objects that are normally associated with kitchen supplies. Nothing too exotic to indicate much specifics, nothing rare or only found in a particular place. Might be a Texicalli or Oriental restaurant, might be something else entirely: there is too little to go on here. One of these traces did however consist of an exotic oil extract that was definitely not in an average eatery: commercial-grade massage oil. The Policeman will also reveal that he (or she if they got someone female) held back some of the samples for their own protection.

Lastly, if the players have somehow missed it, the Wiley-Rosen connection can be stressed here. That will get the Players onto the right track.

THE YAKUZA'S OFFER

Like **Star of the Plains**, this scene could be run as a separate means of becoming involved in the investigation writ large, or as a more polished method to get the characters to connect the dots between the evil-doers and the Yummy Dragon – or at least as a means of entry to the Oriental Section of the city.

Either coming off their run-in with Metro PD intransigence over the case or if the Players seem to not have a handle on the situation, the following encounter could serve to point them in the right direction. It could also serve as a way to prompt them during the second part of the adventure. The players should note however that the Yakuza will only become involved if the players 'come onto their radar' and they should not be treated like a magical or omniscient group. Still, they have a lot of connections.

Setting Up the Meeting

The PCs are approached by an extremely well dressed man of Japanese descent. He introduces himself as Katsumata and tells them his employer would be honored if they would take a meeting

Part One: Honor Bound

with him. If asked he will tell them his employer is Ori Anjou.

An *Investigate* (Intelligence or Education, +2) check or a *Streetwise* (Intelligence or Social standing, +4) check will identify Mr. Anjou as the head of the Yakuza in Kansas City. If the PCs accept Katsumata's offer (highly recommended if they want to keep ties), a limousine will quickly pull up and whisk them away to their meeting.

Ori Anjou Takes his Last Meeting

The players are taken to a walled estate reminiscent of a Japanese castle.

Description:

Once out of the Car, you are ushered into a peaceful-looking home that faces well away from the bustling megacity. There are guards discreetly placed all around the estate and in small towers around the wall. No weapons are visible but you don't doubt that they are present or within easy reach.

You are lead into a courtyard where there is a pool in the central garden that is stocked with practically priceless Earth-originating Koi. There is a rock and pebble garden for peaceful raking and contemplation, beautiful shrubbery, and stone benches arrayed in a serene pattern.

In one corner of the garden there are some items laid out: a bowl of water two swords one short and one long as well as several pieces of what appears to be rice paper.

If the PCs (or your players) are at all familiar with Oriental culture they will probably be begging for rolls to identify what is going on here, as these are all items used in Japanese ritual suicide (Seppuku). If the PCs are so impolite as to ask about the items they will be met with a cold stare and Katsumata will step in and politely tell them that Mr. Anjou will be the one asking questions, and they are to respond only to Mr. Anjou's questions.

It is in this setting that the PCs will be introduced to the ancient head of the Yamaguchi Yakuza, Oyabun Ori Anjou. His appearance is somewhat disconcerting because he looks ancient, which is quite uncommon in the 30th century where even the very old at least *look* young.

Description:

An old man enters the courtyard, dressed in simple yet elegant fashion that is strictly traditional. Stooped but still apparently spry, he moves with complete confidence, practically gliding as he walks to the players. When he

speaks, his voice has the slight wobble of a very old Centennial.

"Are you interested in determining the identity of the people behind the Yamaguchi Ripper?" he asks them very directly. His eyes bore into theirs.

Dialogue: From here on out, the Referee is going to have to get more creative. Keep in mind that Ori Anjou is a strict traditionalist and a Centennial. He is performing a role that he sees as utterly symbolic of his life:

- ▶ "These behind these assaults are a group of foul... creatures.. who are the enemy of all mankind – including the Yakuza. They are known as the..." [*He hesitates just barely, then hisses.*]
"Takara."
- ▶ "The *Takara* come originally from Laos, where they were often called the 'other people' even before humanity began to splinter and corrupt itself with our technology. Although they look like us, they are not human at all. They are not even as 'human' as the subhumans among us – the uplifted beings and the Artificial Intelligences."
[Referee Note: The Yakuza isn't overly interested in nonhumans with their concern over purity.]
- ▶ "They have been created for the sole purpose of our downfall. They steal men's souls and corrupt their bodies. They conspire to bring down the great with their own vices and give them foul new ones as well."
- ▶ "A ghost was working with Wiley. One of our Little Brothers who called himself Shadowborn among the *gaijin*. He was killed using someone from outside of Kansas City, outside of the Republic of the Plains: A London-based Netpilot named Revanche. Revanche has powerful friends, we will not touch him." [**Referee Note:** If this is where the game begins, use that statement to direct the Players towards Wiley and his notes]
- ▶ "As powerful as they are, they are also weak in their own way. You must locate the nest of these Takara and root them out from their secret places. Find the nest and destroy their Queen. This is the key. This is the only way to save us all from them and their corruption."

With that he will turn away from the PCs indicating they have been dismissed.

Katsumata will quickly usher them out deflecting their questions as much as possible. If the players ask him for any further details, he will keep repeating the mantra "Find the Takara, just find the Takara..."

SPRING STREET SHELTER

The shelter is one of those used in the city council's plan to provide housing for the homeless (whether they want it or not) and get much of the criminal and destitute off the streets. Established in a niche underneath the city's water storage and treatment plant, the shelter is little more than a concentration of the city's discarded people. The Shelter has been designed to meet the bare minimum requirements for occupancy, beyond this the ambiance of the shelter is similar to a post-apocalyptic prison.

Description (Exterior):

There are few cars in this section of the Lowdown and the Slideways do not run into these sections. Nonetheless, there is a road, and automated vehicles often ply it so the locals keep off it lest they turn into another kind of statistic.

You reach the Spring Street Shelter, which is nestled under one of the cities major water treatment reservoirs and note that there is a crowd of around 75-100 gathered around the exterior. No KCPD presence is nearby.

The crowd is shouting and doing some minor property damage here and there to the exterior as you arrive, but there are no police in evidence. Most of the people in the crowd have a glowing red dot under the skin on their neck. A few are glowing yellow.

As discussed in the player insert on 'Clean Streets', The glowing red means that they cannot leave, yellow means that they have to get back to the shelter. This is all a function of the Clean Streets Initiative in Kansas City, and these semi-riots are common enough that the Police don't bother to come out. The damage is caught on camera and added to the records of the malcontents (thus lengthening their ineligibility for the full dole).

At the top of the hour, (Referees should use as deemed necessary) the players see the following:

Suddenly the yellow dots turn red and the red dots turn green. There is a ragged cheer from the crowd and some mingled groans as the green-dots start to file out of the crowd, moving in bunches and packs away from the building.

The ex-yellow-now-red dots loiter for a while, muttering. While some of them continue the "fun" the vast majority begin to stream inside.

Approach with Caution

Whether the "shift change" occurs with the Players present or not, the Shelter crowd is going to cause

Brother, can you spare a Credstick?

The Clean Streets Initiative (see Insert) has been sweeping up the vagrant problem in Kansas City. The average Kancitian is torn over this issue however: there is a tension between the genuine desire for a reform and the severeness of this approach that makes many uneasy. The Tagging process alone is causing a groundswell of discontent among voters.

But where is this problem coming from in the first place?

Given that there is a significant Unemployment issue in the Setting (somewhere close to 30%) created by labor dislocation, where do vagrants and the need for shelters come from? With a dole that large, what's going on? There are two perfectly good answers to that:

- ▷ Metagame-wise having a poor and downtrodden are helpful to a story from time to time. Happy shiny futures have no need for crime and the sort of mayhem most adventures involve. Simply put: We Refs need 'em.
- ▷ There is a tension that is involved in the unemployment situation that cannot be resolved by more robotic labor and fancier tech. Actually, there is more than one, but they are related: the need for consumption to maintain an essentially capitalist model and the gap between the dole and what is needed to survive even in a hyperefficiency flat. The government provides just *below* what is needed. This forces people to look for work, even temporary work ("Oddjobbing"). It also means that sometimes they cannot make it and slip through the cracks.

Beyond this, there is also an issue with *eligibility*. Orions with criminal records are not eligible for full benefits for a certain amount of time (based on crime) and thus they have nowhere else to turn.

City Ecology

The Water Storage and Treatment facility on Spring Street is one of hundreds of such facilities designed to allow the teeming millions of Kansas City to live without stressing the resources of Terra any more than they already have. The place was designed to be as self-contained as possible. The city then later built these vagrant shelter facilities in an out-of-the-way (and frankly undesirable) location where they already owned the land. Like the water treatment facility. Unfortunately, this makes shelters even worse to actually *live* in, but the city doesn't really mind. Why should they? The decision-makers don't have to live here, and neither do the Tax-paying Kancitians.

Part One: Honor Bound

some friction as they come into contact with the PCs. This is inevitable, and a major social problem of the city since the Clean Streets Initiative began. Shelter residents are very resentful of the freedom of movement enjoyed by “normal” Kancitians. This is understandable to some degree, but it often manifests in outbursts of violence.

In order to provide a little stimulation (since by now, the players should have been combing through information resources), the referee can have this potential bubble over. The reasoning is simple: emotions around shift change run high. This is why the KCPD was nowhere near; because the semi-riot turns into a real riot with even minimal official presence. Even those who are now “at liberty” are keyed up, throttled high, and they are looking at some “straights” who apparently have nothing better to do than alley cat around their neighborhood.

Then there are the genuine “bad elements” among the shelter residents, ex-criminals who are angry and bored. They want someone to resist.

Description: *While approaching the shelter, you see four street thugs moving to intercept you. The thugs are armed with a variety of light hand weapons such as knives, pipes and chains and they clearly have the eagerness to use them for a little of the old ultraviolence.*

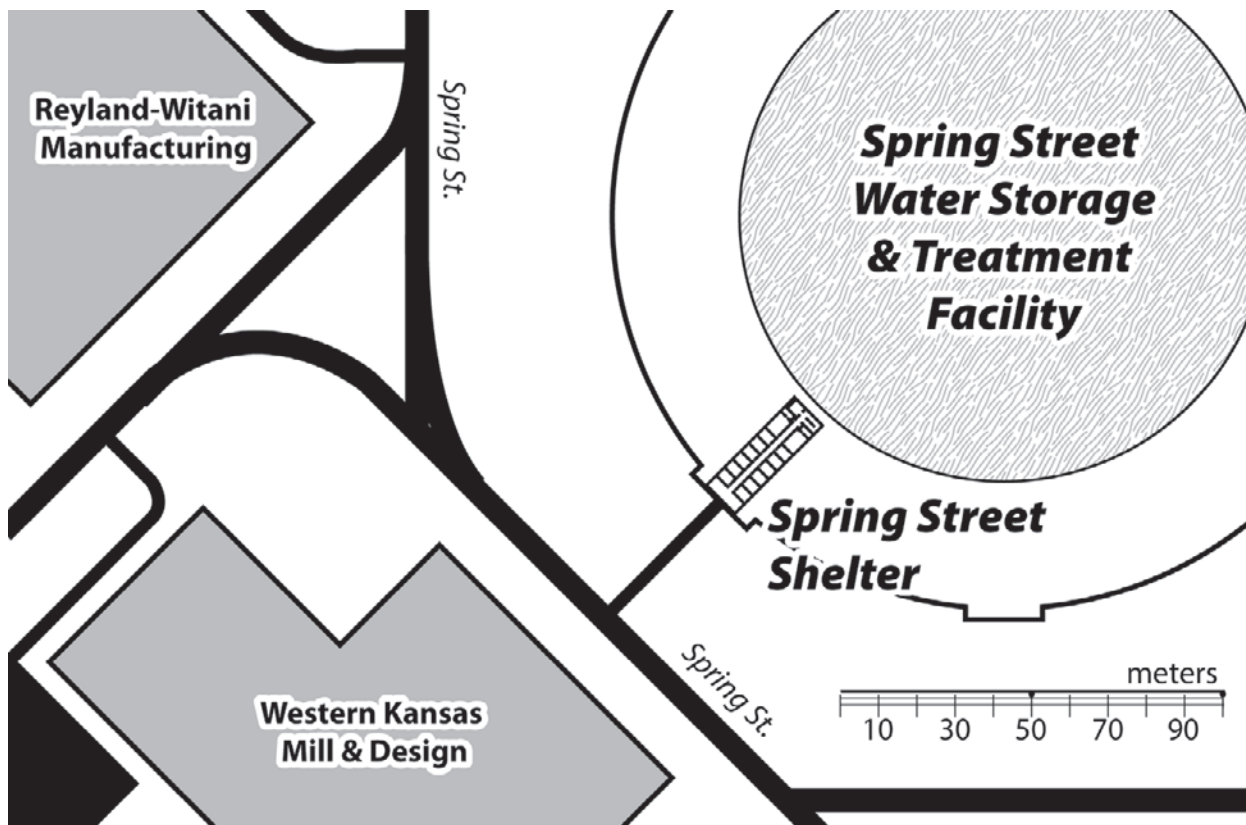
The thugs appear to be little more than older teens, but their demeanor says it all: they mean business, and their business is violence.

The players do not need to fight the thugs in order to get them to back down; players can attempt a *Streetwise (Intelligence, +0)* or a *Persuade (Strength, -1)* skill check to talk down the thugs and get them to let the players pass.

Description (Interior):

Opening the door of the Shelter, one can feel the heat and humidity inside. The air is thick with the smell of chlorinated water, and the clammy result makes most people begin to sweat profusely as soon as they enter.

Trash litters the halls, graffiti covers most bear surfaces, dried blood and human waste are all over and vagrants can be found sleeping in the halls, elevators and other spots throughout the shelter. The smell becomes worse as one moves deeper inside, cut slightly by the chlorine smell. The lighting is sparse and erratic; making some areas of the shelter completely dark while others are bathed in bright light day and night. Various smartsigns scattered around the walls proclaim the benefits of “Staying Straight” and “Becoming a Valued Member of Society”; these have been targeted for special abuse. One has



been reprogrammed in a particularly graphic way that is both scandalous and hilarious.

Inside of the Lobby, there is a Computer terminal (Marked with stars on the map) inside of the wall, its face covered by a thick layer of transparent composite. However it looks as if someone smashed the thick composite open (no mean feat) and began to cannibalize what was within. Another computer screen appears to be next to the stairwell, and that may be intact (they cannot see from here). [Referee's Notes: It is]

For Characters that ask about Computer Systems: There is a computer system inside of the Building, which is built into the load-bearing walls wall, with sealed touch-based controls that are behind thick plaz. Many of them look like they have been attacked, but a few do function. The Intellect system however is a bit primitive, perhaps even stupid by digital standards, which probably reflects having been tampered with so often.

If the players enter the Shelter, there are usually a few people loitering around in the Lobby and the Common rooms. If they enter just after a shift change, all of the neck-implants of those inside the Shelter are shining red.

The players must first locate Rosen in the seven-story shelter; no one provided details as to where in the shelter Rosen is located. This was not an oversight, anyone who knows about the Shelters knows that people move in and around them constantly. The two easiest methods of locating Rosen involve the players asking around among the residents or using the shelter's internal computer system.

- ▷ Players asking around find themselves knocking on doors and waking those asleep in the halls; doing so allows players to attempt a *Persuade (Intelligence, -2)* skill check.
- ▷ Players attempting to use the shelter's computers find the system outdated, riddled with errors and very difficult to navigate; players can attempt a *Computers (Intelligence, -2)* skill check.

Success on either of the above skill checks result in the players locating Rosen's room on the fifth level, room 5-7. Failure to locate Rosen's room means the characters must search for another means to locate the man, most likely knocking on doors and going through apartments one by one.

The journey through the shelter is one fraught with anxiety and uncertainty; the players are



Shelter Map

Typical Vagrant/Resident of the Shelters

STR: 6 **DEX:** 6 **END:** 7 **INT:** 6 **EDU:** 5 **SOC:** 4

Skills: Deception 1, Melee (Unarmed 1), Recon 1, Stealth 1, Streetwise 1, Trade (various) 0,

Equipment: Nothing of value

Street Thugs aka "the Spring Street Droogs"

STR: 9(+1) **DEX:** 8 **END:** 7 **INT:** 6 **EDU:** 5 **SOC:** 5

Skills: Deception 1, Melee (Blade 1/Unarmed 1, or Unarmed 2), Recon 1, Stealth 1, Streetwise 2,

Equipment: Knife (d6+2+STR DM), Leather Jacket in Gang colors (Jack, AV: 1)

clearly out of their element and the residents of the shelter are unpredictable and potentially dangerous. They don't want trouble for the most part, but paranoia, suspicion and violence are a way of life for many of them.



Rosen, formerly Sergeant Jan Rosen, 144th Terra Fusiliers. Currently a Volt Junkie in the Spring Street Shelter.

MEETING ROSEN

Referee Note: This scene is the “portal to the Payoff” and primarily a roleplaying exercise. It is simply a matter of how they get the notebooks from this point forward.

Description From the Hallway:

The first thing they notice outside of 5-7 are three bullet-holes in the door and three bullets lodged into the wall behind it. The holes have been sealed back up with some sort of detritus from the inside, food packaging perhaps.

Knocking on the door of room 5-7 will do nothing. Rosen does not want to reveal himself. Rosen refuses to answer the door despite anything said or threatened, and probably couldn't if he did make the effort: he has been reduced to a quivering mass long before that point.

Room Description:

Rosen's room is typical of those in the shelter, small and filthy. No furniture exists in the room, only piles of clothes, blankets and garbage. The smell in the room is only slightly better than that of the hall. A small, frosted window casts a strange green light across the room that serves as the only real illumination in the room. It is weak, but good enough to see by for most purposes. A small caliber pistol lays on the floor, clip ejected and thrown against the far wall.

Rosen's Description:

Rosen is a middle-aged man, his clothing ragged and dirty. He looks just this side of emaciated, (almost thirty pounds lighter than the last photo taken of him). Once the players are in the room they notice a small knife concealed in Rosen's hand, his hand shakes slightly while holding the weapon.

Depending on how the Players enter the room, he is either docile (and still holding the knife) or holding the knife to his own throat.

If the Players barge inside: The door is secured, but the lock is not that great, nor in fact is the door itself (or the useless barricade he scrambled together). An *Athletics (Strength) (Strength, +1)* or *Strength (-2)* check is sufficient to bust it in/down. The knife blade touches and activates his Transponder, which glows green (he can leave any time) Rosen immediately demands that the players tell him who they are what they're doing here looking for him. He holds a knife at his own throat and after a few moments, blood will start to trickle down slowly as he presses it against his unshaven face.

If the Players break inside without violence: (by picking the door lock for instance or using a passkey lifted from elsewhere) Rosen is still holed up in a corner of the apartment, but does not have the knife poised at his throat. Instead, he holds it shaking, in front of him in a marine-style knife-fighting technique grip

While these actions may seem nonsensical, Rosen knows more than he has been telling anyone (and indeed, more than he ever would; he came close to telling Wiley but stopped. No one in the Universe would he have a closer relationship with, although if Amanda Foster survives he might relate his dark secrets to her later). His logic is simple and astoundingly on-target: If the Takara came for him, they would burst in and he would be better off dead. Anyone else he might be able to warn off (as he has done with the gun until he ran out of bullets) or fight with (not really likely).

Dealing with Rosen

If they wish to discuss anything with him, the players must convince Rosen of their motives, which requires either a *Persuade (Intelligence or Social Standing, +2)* or *Diplomacy (Intelligence or Social Standing, -1)* skill check. If the PCs barged inside, the check is at an additional -1. If the PCs are people known to him (like Baker from the Pre-Generated Characters), the check has a +2 DM bonus but only for that character (although others obviously with someone he knows have a +1 DM bonus)

Success indicates Rosen believes the characters and hurries them into his room by insisting they come inside and shut the door behind them. If the Players get an **Extraordinary Success**, they can add 2 to the result of their next check with Rosen. A **Failure** results in him screaming and clutching the knife. If the players approach and he has the knife, he may well take his own life before they can ask him their questions. If this is natural to the scene, so be it.

Interrogation

If the PCs do make a successful check to placate the poor man, they can begin to interrogate him, Rosen shakes his head and sets the knife down. If PCs remove the knife, he will not stop them. When questioned regarding Stephen Wiley, he will relate the following in a rational calm voice:

- *His initial statement:* "Nearly two weeks ago Wiley came around asking about any strange activity since the clean streets' policy was put into place. The question was nothing too special, you had to know Wiley... he had a way of getting things... getting things out of you..." *Social Science (Psychology) (Education, +0) or Investigate (Intelligence, -2)* check reveals that he is hiding something; he practically winces in physical pain at this statement.
- *If gently prompted, he will continue:* "I had nothing for him. Nothing... he needed. Anyway, he left after we had a few beers. I..." *He tears up.* "I didn't see him until a few days ago. (he will say if pushed here) He was scared. Bone scared..." *He is openly weeping now.* "He had a gun. B-But he got a message from his girlfriend. A-Amanda was going to his apartment. He said he had to get there, stop her before she went up. He wanted me to hold onto... some stuff for him..." *He dissolves into tears, an agonized look on his face.* "I couldn't tell him... I haven't seen him since, I know that they got him."
- *Only If pressed:* "I couldn't say anything to him before, then later it didn't matter. He already knew. He already knew. I knew he was in over his head..." *He stares into the eyes of the most sympathetic character.* "He said he knew all about the killings, that he wasn't safe anymore. They were after him. On his trail. I offered to go with him when he went back to stop Amanda, but he said... he said he needed me to hold onto that data. It was important. He said not to let anyone have it. Not the cops, not anyone." *He stares accusingly at the player now.* (he is reminded about his promise)

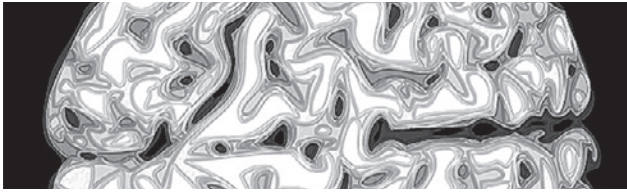
- *If pressed further, he breaks down utterly and must be placated once more to deal with cogently if they wish to. He has nothing more really to add.*

To get him to give up the Notes: If asked, Rosen has an immediate negative reaction. "No no no. Wiley said not to give it up. He said to protect it." After this Initial response, though he pauses. A *Social Science (Psychology) (Education, +1) or Investigate (Intelligence, -1)* check reveals that he wants to give it up, to end his burden, but he will not just hand it over. Rosen must be given a reason. There are no hard and fast rules, the Referee (as Rosen) will have to play this by ear, but remember that he wants to give up, he wants this to be over. He is willing to part with what he has, is eager to in fact, but he isn't going to for some lame effort on the part of the players. He is also all-but immune to torture threats; although they could harden his resolve entirely: dying would be doing him a favor.

To snatch the Notes from him: While he was once a fearsome soldier, a literal one-man wrecking machine, Rosen is hardly a match for a determined Orion Youth Scout much less hardened PCs. He is literally sitting on the information, shielding it with his body. He is wasted, but not emaciated; he is weak, but not completely out, he will mount a token offense that said Youth Scout could easily evade or contain. PCs should be made to feel like the heels they are if they take this violent action against a man that is essentially helpless and frightened out of his mind. Crank up the pathos, maybe have him suicide later: Violence is often the quickest and easiest solution, but it has consequences.

The Aftermath: Ultimately, Rosen either provides or the PCs snatch away a small notebook filled with papers and wrapped with a rubber band and a separate banged up datapad which has been security-locked. Scribbled on the pages are Wiley's handwritten raw notes regarding this case and a few others he was working on, but the Yamaguchi Ripper case has obviously become his central focus for the last few days. The contents of the datapad can be accessed only after a considerable amount of effort on the players part: a *Computer (Education, 10-60 minutes, +0)* check is required, or the password is entered, which Rosen knows and might be cajoled into providing.

Once he has handed his burden over, Rosen will curl himself into a fetal position and stop communicating. Players making appropriate checks should discover that he has now given up, his final 'betrayal' of Wiley being too much for him



Deep Brain Stimulation

The practice of Deep Brain Stimulation involves two steps: First, place electrodes into the pleasure centers of the brain itself. Second, apply a steady flow of current to the electrodes. This creates an instant (and cheap, as well as highly addictive) high.

In the Twilight Sector Setting, addicts of Deep Brain Stimulation are referred to *Volt Junkies*. The practice is very commonplace, and has become the most popular means of suicide in the 30th Century. Cheap (once the electrodes are planted) and relatively easy (just plug in) as well as highly addictive generally adds up to problems for society.

Efforts by the stellar nations to ban or even limit this practice have proven fruitless. It is too easy to perform the simple procedure, and even when the actual electrodes are banned, it is too easy to simply make them with available materials. Most local governments have decided to take the other route: criminalizing addicts. This has not stemmed the tide. This is also why Rosen has a record, not for violence, but his addiction.

Thrill seekers are often easy targets because the similarity of the “high”. It is also a matter of some concern that so many returning Veterans of the Mutant War are turning into Volt Junkies. For some it was the horror of the conflict, for others the adrenaline rush. This has become one of the more disturbing statistics of the War, with thousands dying daily in a battle over the true hearts and minds of these shattered men and women.

to take. He knows that there are horrific things out there and knows that they will eventually get him, whether or not he still has the datapad and other notes. Exactly how they deal with him at this point is a matter for their conscience. Rosen is a Volt Junkie, the jack at the base of his skull isn't good for anything but mainlining current now. If they leave him he will either just dies of neglect, or wake and plug himself in (dying shortly thereafter as he starves himself). Anyone with any level of *Investigate* or *Streetwise* will see this without any need for a check.

Regardless of how they deal with Rosen, the players will doubtless want to leave the shelter without further incident and should find a quiet place to review Wiley's notes (as Rosen's lighting is terrible for reading if nothing else).

WILEY'S NOTEBOOK

Wiley's conventional notes are a jumble of hand-scratched names, dates and locations throughout Kansas City. After reading through the information, the players can make the following assessments of the data without any specific checks. (See *Player Handout: Wiley's Data* in the Appendix where the description and basic clues are compiled and presented for the players in a single written form)

The datapad is scratched and has several dents in the outer casing, but nothing altogether too serious or permanent. It appears as if Rosen may have thrown it away from him in frustration as his mind spiraled further downward. But the pad was designed for a beat reporter, which means it was designed to work after rough treatment.

It takes the players some time to look through the datapad and even more to decode the handwritten notes and make some sense of them. Included in the notes *writ large* is the basic information of the case, including: the names of the victims, the dates they vanished, and other public information that the players already have access to. This list is far longer than anything official, and there is a list almost equal in length of cases that Wiley either crossed out as non-abductions or placed a question mark next to as mere possibilities. And this is just what one man found after two weeks working essentially on his own. Also among the notes are crime scene photos of some of the murder victims, revealing dismembered corpses and grisly locations where the bodies were dumped. It is a painstaking record and an excellent example of investigative journalism of the highest order.

There are good reasons that Wiley's notes are superior to the records of the police – and especially the general public—has. First, there is information that has been suppressed: there are far more of these kidnapping/murders than ever suspected and they have simply gone unreported or under reported over time. Perhaps the police have deliberately hid them in order to avoid the potential political backlash – particularly as the pressure mounts to find whoever is responsible. In fact the disappearances, which officially number just over a dozen or so, are actually closer to five dozen if one counts the number of reports that Wiley painstakingly researched and documented. More if one bothers to talk to the street folk (which Wiley did do as part of the investigation). This expanded figure is thus still conservative

and somewhat conjectural. And while the public disappearances have been going on since the recent "Clean Streets" program kicked in, the problem among the street people and other unwanted of the city predates the Yamaguchi Ripper by a considerable measure.

Another curiosity in the notes on the datapad: Just before he dropped the datapad to Rosen, Wiley had received some curious photos that were taken from low-resolution versions of overhead satellite feeds. These show several abductions – strange-looking mutants (or at least some very strange combat implants) hustling their victims into nondescript cars. These last bits of information came without any real identifier other than initials: "C.M."

Clues:

Basic Data: The following clues can be gained by analyzing Wiley's notes. Referees are free to reveal these to the players in any order as well as add their own, as they see fit:

- ▷ The murders have been far more widespread than reported, and stretch back well before the Yamaguchi Ripper became public knowledge. They also include a variety of other, under or unreported abductions that number at least into the mid-60s. He states, purely as conjecture, that the further this thing goes back (he's just charted a six-month frame where he can get data from) the figures mount up quickly.
- ▷ The police seem baffled and hobbled at the same time in their investigations. The evidence that Wiley has unraveled does not directly confirm that this is deliberate, it could well be an artifact of the pressure to solve these crimes and the natural inclination of the police to seek the simplest answer to their current (political) dilemma. There are names in the notes of Officers that have been vocal about this inside of the force and many have been sidelined (either before the notes were given to Rosen or subsequently).
- ▷ A ghost of a Netpilot friend from the War named *Shadowborn* was helping Wiley, but this ally has since been destroyed by a nasty cyber attack that came seemingly out of nowhere. *Shadowborn* revealed that the Video System has been compromised quite deliberately by someone using a backdoor into the KCPD system and a sophisticated viral attack program to temporarily shut down and lock out the video feed is selected areas. *Shadowborn* was trying to find out more about these issues when he was murdered.
- ▷ Either by design or by accident (no proof either way), the Oriental District seems to always blink out whenever there are outages elsewhere. Also, the Oriental District is the place most prone to ongoing problems with their video system. This suggests that it may simply be a problem in that part of the system that the virus makes worse. Of course, it could also be by design. This led Wiley to try and draw some connections with the information he had and the Oriental district.

Additional Data: Players should make an *Investigate (Intelligence, 10-60 minutes, +0)* skill check to find important pieces of important information among the notes. Each player reviewing the notes is allowed a check and each success reveals a clue from those listed below:

- ▷ Several unreliable witnesses (most of whom are vagrants) reported that the Yamaguchi Ripper incidents are being conducted by people who appear to be either "oriental" (in their words), "mutants" or both. There is however a lot of really 'bad data' here as well – inconsistencies and some outright bizarreness (one individual claimed that they saw a woman with a tentacle coming out of her mouth, another claims they saw something flying over the city on leathery wings, most of these accounts Wiley recorded but dismissed).
- ▷ A weird coda was added to the files, apparently part of a blind email sent from someone who only signed it "C.M.": it includes some low-resolution images of people being hustled into vehicles. The vehicle numbers match some of those in the police reports, all of which were found abandoned in random sections of the city. The images reveal little about the culprits, face recognition software is useless when they are covered up as they are in the photos. But the fact that these images exist *somewhere* is a mystery in and of itself and triggers a good deal of paranoia by Wiley.
- ▷ If the Referee wishes, this is also a good place to bring up the name 'Takara', see notes under *Analysis*. Wiley heard it, wrote it down but made no connections. **[Referee Note:** This was actually what Amanda Foster was on her way to see him about.]
- ▷ In several places, the compiled data seems to make one neighborhood in Yamaguchi city stand out, a place called Little Pakxe (pronounced Pack-SAY):

Part One: Honor Bound

- ▷ The Video feeds from this neighborhood are among the worst even in the spotty Yamaguchi City District.
- ▷ A woman named Takeo Batchai was questioned by police regarding the disappearance of one of the victims. While the details are sketchy, apparently the officer in question (who has since been relocated) thought enough to bring her into the local station for questioning. Ms. Batchai lives in Little Pakxe and her occupation is listed as 'waitress' in the police report. The report originally listed the restaurant where she worked, but this was redacted at some point and Wiley could not recover the data. This is not entirely uncommon when Officers make a mistake as they take the data down. The fact that the women as later released might be why the name was not entered later). Privacy laws prevented Wiley from tracing her through the tax records or Employment Bureau and often Waitresses like her work multiple jobs.
- ▷ The belongings of another murder victim were pawned by a street thug named Ito (who was cleared of the murder by an ironclad alibi – he was in custody at the time) at a shop called 24-Hour Pawn in Little Pakxe of the Yamaguchi City District. This was offered to Wiley by one of the officers in which he was in contact.
- ▷ One of the missing persons was last seen at the Yummy Dragon Restaurant in Little Pakxe. This was not the only such connection, after all every one of the victims was last seen somewhere, but Wiley noted it in his handwritten records as it had to do with Little Pakxe.

Analysis:

A few things stand out here which the Referee may want to subtly integrate into their descriptions:

The Mood: Also Players reading through Wiley's notes are able to see tension in later entries through the obvious handwriting, although this could be it was rushed. On a successful *Social Science (Psychology) (Education, +0)* or *Investigate (Intelligence, -2)* check they will sense a clear and growing pattern of fear and paranoia on the part of the author.

Something deeply rattled this man, and that alone added to his anxiety. He had faced many an opponent, in and out of the war, and he

always faced down those fears. This investigation apparently scared him down to the bottom of his soul. As Wiley collected information and began to discover important clues he became less coherent in his notes as well. That included comments which quite openly declared his growing fear.

A Sense of Disconnection: Additionally, Wiley closed himself off from others during this point (recall he did not let Rosen help him and stopped sending regular reports to his boss) and it quickly becomes clear to the players that Wiley thought those responsible for these crimes would soon find him and that their power and influence went far beyond what he expected from a serial killer.

Information Roundup, Part I: This would be a good time to infodump the players that fact that the surveillance network for the city is being deliberately blacked out in each and every case where the Yamaguchi Ripper struck. This alone should be enough for the KCPD to know that this is not isolated events, they are themselves spreading the rumors about the Yamaguchi Ripper being hype to take some of the heat off themselves.

If the PCs have already encountered this information elsewhere, this should confirm it for them. An internal report, which has been suppressed and even removed from the main system, indicates that there is a backdoor the culprits are using, as well as a sophisticated virus that shuts down the surveillance network for so long. Wiley's ghost friend Shadowborn was able to access this for him. Shadowborn detailed for Wiley the intermittent yet massive holes in the system, and the fact that there seemed to be a pattern to the gaps.

Information Roundup, Part II: This would also be a good time (if it has not yet occurred) to introduce the name 'Takara'. In some games however, this might be too much of a tip-off, so Referees should consider what is right for their group before adding this tidbit. If the players had the chance to meet with the Yakuza already and blew off the (now dead) leader, or if they have allowed that portion of the investigation to get snowed under, this might be a good time to drop in a reminder.

A "Paper Trail" of sorts: The information Wiley has downloaded from the KCPD system (thanks to Shadowborn) has since been altered/doctored, but he saved them as raw sourcefiles, including the authentication codes. Thus these files will be able to serve as genuine evidence in later stages of the investigation/revelation to the public if needed.

A direction forward: Just perusing this information could be a vital source to clues that lead to the second scene: the fact for example that the Yamaguchi district is always blacked out when these 'mysterious outages' of the video system occur. While this seems like a stupid mistake by the culprits of these terrible crimes, it really is the only way to handle things once surveillance becomes this ubiquitous.

Laying the Groundwork even further

forward: Regarding the contributions of "C.M.": This of course was none other than Cybil Mar, who had been aware of the investigation peripherally and sent along some tidbits she was able to glean from the OSS systems. At some point, she hoped to connect up with Wiley, but he was taken right after she contacted him and she shut down all further efforts to protect her background. She (correctly) surmised that he was dead anyway. The clues might also be helpful to PCs both to track down the locations and connect to the real culprits in the cult. Of course they should also establish a connection in the next scene.

Amanda Foster (again)

In those variants of the adventure that use Amanda as a female companion of Wiley, she was the one who forced herself into the situation by confronting him at his apartment. While this will not be revealed in the notes, Referees may want to sprinkle in details like the following:

- "Amanda doesn't need to know this. She cannot know this. I have to protect her, even if it costs us the relationship."
- "She was at my apartment today again, demanding to know what was up. I really can't keep stone-walling her but there is no other way. Maybe I should just break it off now to protect her?"

As a reminder for the Referee:

You may wish to use the Audio File "Stephen Wiley's Audio Journal" here to get a feel for his take on the story as it happened.

PLAYER INSERTS ON THE NOTES

The information from the above material is provided as a Player Insert that the Referee can simply hand to their players. However, sometimes it's better just to cut to the chase, and so...

What Read? Read!

The note provide a lot of information, and not all players are going to want to read it. One way to get around this is for the Referee to provide an "executive Summary" for the players in addition to handing them the Player Inserts.

Basic Data:

- ▷ First, there were a lot more abductions than the police realize. A lot went unreported or have been covered up.
- ▷ Second, the KCPD are baffled, but it looks like this was deliberate from "higher up"
- ▷ Third, a Ghost named Shadowborn helped Wiley for a while. Before he was killed, the Ghost revealed that the KCPD surveillance system has been hacked and has major blackouts. But these blackouts get worse when their are Ripper Incidents.
- ▷ Fourth, there is a lot of problems with the surveillance systems in Yamaguchi City all the time. Might be natural, might be an artifact of the same phenomenon.

Additional Data:

Available if the players do well with a skill check or devote time to it (these are in no particular order)

- ▷ Lots of crazy talk, Wiley dismissed most of it. See details on Sheet
- ▷ There was a wierd bunch of sat-feeds, pictures from orbit, showing some of the Ripper Incidents. No signature and no trail back. These were signed only "C.M."
- ▷ Name Takara came up, but Wiley didn't know what it meant. [add if relevant: Amanda Foster did find out some information however, and may have been coming back to his apartment to tell hm that]
- ▷ Yamaguchi City stands out, lots of cross-references there, beyond the hokey title that Keith gave them.



PART I, ACT TWO: BUTCHERY

Act two puts the players on the trail of the deadly Takara and conflict breaks out as the players enter the Yummy Dragon Restaurant in search of answers.

Using these encounters

The Objective for this portion of the adventure is to end with the players having a combat-based encounter with the Takara in the Yummy Dragon. For Referees looking for the simplest, most direct method (or the fastest for Convention-style play where everything must be accomplished within a single tight session), use the following: **Yummy Dragon (Business Hours)** (since they are practically handed this information) > **The Yamaguchi Takeout** (to provide a little action) > **After Hours** (to finish this scene out). Again, this is not the only way to proceed.

If not already played out in Act One, the players might get approached by the Yakuza (**The Yakuza's Offer**) for the Takara angle. Players on their own are likely to bring up other loose ends in this scene like checking on Johnny Ito's pawnbroker (Hardcore Pawn) or checking out **Takeo Batchai** which is a great time to use **Yamaguchi Takeout**. Players in the know about the Takara may well bring up **Investigating the Takara** on their own if they know about them (which could also happen as an interlude after this Act of the campaign and before the next).

Referee Note: Getting personal with the Takara

Up to this point, the perpetrators of the Yamaguchi Ripper slayings have been shadowy unknown figures. Beginning with Act Two, the players will actually start interacting with the Takara themselves. When they do, it is important for the Referee to establish a mood for these diabolical cultists.

Many of the Takara have strange characteristics and appear to be rather unusual mutants, which they are often mistaken for by average citizens. This often says more about the casual racism of even enlightened Kancitians than it does about the Takara, because they are clearly not your average mutant.

Players encountering members of the Takara will find them something more than human, but not in a good sense. All Takara have an 'otherworldly' nature that leaves most people (including mutants) uncomfortable in their presence. Referees should try to play this up in describing how the Takara look, how they move and how they make the players feel. Though the "feel" of these creatures rests on nothing quantifiable, it should be clear to the players that the Takara are well beyond human.

INVESTIGATING THE TAKARA

For players that have had the opportunity to meet with Ori Anjou of the Yakuza (either as a patron or as an encounter), or if the Referee decides to drop some information into their hands through Wiley's Notebook, the Players may want to seek out information about the Takara and Little Pakxe.

Initial Searches

If the players decide to search out the term 'Takara' they have their work cut out for them, Finding out someone who even heard of the word, much less knows something, is apparently quite difficult.

- ▷ A web search will reveal several entries which identify them as a sort of Japanese bogey man used to frighten children. Little more than this is found. [**Referee Note:** This stuff is useless]
- ▷ If they think to ask for someone familiar with Japanese culture they may begin to look around Academia or cultural nodes on the Internet. Here they will be eventually directed to Kannushi-Hiro Fuwa at the *Izumo Taisha* Shinto Shrine which is in what passes for the downtown of Yamaguchi City. [**Referee Note:** The information about the Kannushi can also be acquired through Amanda Foster's connections should the Referee decide to utilize those.]

The Shinto Shrine in Yamaguchi

The *Izumo Taisha* Shinto Shrine is located in one of the more high profile sections of Yamaguchi City. It is a delicate shrine built in the *Sumiyoshi-zukuri* style, with rectangular box-like honden (shrine structure) that rests under a simple uncurved roof that has a tall peak and low sides. The roof is decorated with brightly colored ornamental poles that have been carved by hand. The building is surrounded by a small double fence (a short one just outside of the building and a larger one around the perimeter of that) and painted in bright colors. It is a beautiful, serene place nestled within a relatively congested part of the megapolis.

Once the players arrive, they can meet with Kannushi-Hiro Fuwa will be able to provide some information on the Takara.

- ▷ The *Takara* are an ancient boogie man figure, they are not real. But relatively recently since perhaps the 20th century or so, a cult which calls itself by this name has taken on a more real and sinister presence in the Japanese culture.
- ▷ "They reputedly have the power to take men's souls and deny them rebirth. This is actually a Buddhist belief but Buddhism and Shinto beliefs sometimes share a strange synergy even though they are very different. . ." If pressed for further details like 'how?' he says: "They create 'impurity' in men which is an affront to Shinto beliefs. It is said that even the uttering of the name of these foul people will leave an impurity in ones soul. Any greater dealings may require more extreme measures to purify ones soul.
- ▷ "The more modern version of the Takara legend says they are a shunned tribe from somewhere in southeast Asia (most often said to be Laos).
- ▷ "There are several Laotian enclaves in Yamaguchi City but even the Laotians would shun anyone who openly proclaimed themselves as Takara. So if any are present they must be hiding the fact but looking in the Laotian communities would probably be the best way to start."

The Kannushi can confirm that Little Pakxe is a Laotian Community. (Others, should the Referee want to cloud the waters a bit are *Lan-Xang* (which is actually the largest, but it is also integrated with other Asian cultures and has a bit higher profile) and the *Golden Quadrangle* (which again, is actually more of a mixed community, this one is known for its markets).

It is important to note that the Kannushi himself does not believe in the existence of the Takara, and in fact, very few will even those who fear the name beyond all reason. To some extent, this is wishful thinking, but there is also a deliberate effort by the Takara to both keep their names and activities secret while spreading their myth. They have been able to use their psychic talents in this endeavor and have been at it for over a century.

The KBI "Black Files"

Another means of obtaining information on the foul Takara is to get hold of the KBI's "Black File" which has been suppressed by the OSS but still could be located by sufficiently motivated players or contacts/Allies in the archives of the department. These files could also be given to the players by the Yakuza. They should only be used if the Referee feels that the players need more hard data on the Takara rather than the more mysterious organization as presented on the material above. See the Player Inserts at the end of the adventure.

HARDCORE PAWN

One of the clues Wiley uncovered leads to a pawn shop in Kansas City's Oriental District called 24-Hour Pawn in the section of Yamaguchi City known as Little Pakxe.

Police reported finding the belongings of one of the murder victims at the pawn shop, sold to the owner by a street thug named Johnny Ito. The police later cleared Ito of any wrongdoing, but were unable to discover where Ito came upon the belongings. Ito has since disappeared, maybe unwilling to speak to the police any further and maybe another victim (he is listed with a question mark in the Wiley notes as a possible victim).

Players going to the pawn shop can question the owner, an older man of oriental descent named Mister Ha.

Description: *The outside of the 24-Hour Pawn makes the place look deserted, with smoked over windows and a door that appears quite formidable for the average break-in artist.*

The inside of the Hardcore Pawn smells of strong herbs, and visible curlicues of smoke dance around the open door as the players enter. There are seven broadly spaced aisles full of accumulated... stuff... (gaudy trash along with some genuine treasures) all apparently heaped at random on the shelves. Although perhaps not randomly per se: items are collected in what might best be described as an artistic fashion rather than a functional one. The objects seem to flow together.

On a *Social Science (Anthropology, culture, or History) (Education, +0)* or *Art (anything) (Intelligence, -2)* check the players will notice that the place has exceptional *feng shui* and that the objects are grouped according to the dictates of that ancient form.

Interrogating Ha

Players questioning Ha find him suspicious of the outsiders, as he was with the police and Wiley. Players must make a *Persuade (Intelligence or Strength, -1)* or *Diplomacy/Streetwise (Intelligence or Social Standing, -1)* to get Ha to talk. If the characters are law enforcement or even suggest that they are affiliated with the Police (Wiley's problem) all checks with him have an additional -1 DM.

Failure: "You buy something or leave." *If they buy something he takes the money, then says "Now you leave."*

Marginal Failure: Same as Failure, but once they buy something, they get a second check.

Marginal Success: A bit of information is delivered, but not all at once. The players still have to ask questions to prompt him.

- "I don't know where Ito got what he brought me. You ask questions, and so do police. The police took everything Ito got, gave me stupid receipt." *He waves a receipt in the air. "You pay?"*
- *If asked specifically about Wiley* "He asked same questions too. I don't know anything, I told him that and he went away." *Then he adds. "He don't believe me, just like you."* [The notes will confirm this. Wiley actually described him in very unflattering terms, an assessment you can understand given Ha's interpersonal skills.]

Exceptional Success (initial) or after prodding and a second check: Same as above, however he does have some more details about Ito.

- "Ito hasn't been seen around the area lately. Not just here. He hasn't been around the Yummy Dragon Restaurant either. He has friends there I think, hangs around a lot.
- *If asked, Ha himself does not know anything about the restaurant other than that it serves excellent food.*

Once he has answered the player's questions, Ha tells them to leave. On a successful *Social Science (Psychology) (Education, +0)* or *Investigate (Intelligence, -2)* check the Players will sense that Ha is fearful, but that there is little if anything ordinary that they can do to make the stubborn old man budge. If the players do something either exceptionally smart (find some innovative way to get him drunk for example or tempt him with some exotic goods) or exceptionally violent (which is certainly unheroic but has been known to happen) to force him to reveal his 'secret', he confirms that there is something strange, but does not link his suspicions to the Yummy Dragon or another other specific location exclusively. Instead, he feels that there is something weird in the neighborhood; something dark.

"This place has always been on the edge," he reveals (either candidly or belatedly). "The edge of space, the edge of sanity. Things move here that should not. *Things* are moving in the shape of men." He cannot go into further detail, it is not something he knows, but something he feels. He says that once it troubled him, but now he has grown used to it – and he worries that this may have indeed stained his soul. "To find out now would be to confirm my suspicions – and seal my damnation."



Takeo Batchai's Mug Shot, late Autumn 2991

THE YUMMY DRAGON

All slideways will eventually lead to the Yummy Dragon Restaurant. Not only the information players discover on their own, but also the clues Wiley revealed all point to this location. Indeed, the restaurant seems to be at the center of the mystery and the players will eventually seek out the location for clues.

The Yummy Dragon Restaurant is a staple of Kansas City's Oriental District, having been in business for decades. The restaurant provides customers with excellent cuisine at reasonable prices and the staff is known for their prompt service and friendly demeanor.

To all outward appearances, the restaurant is one of many within the city. The staff however is quite distrustful of police, reporters and investigators. The presence of the players will quickly reveal this distrust. The players can easily enter the restaurant during business hours if they wish to eat, but loitering around is discouraged.

Description: *The restaurant is nicely furnished in a typical oriental theme. The building is well-maintained and business is booming for the restaurant as it apparently has been for*

decades. Despite the pleasant atmosphere and the admittedly clean and well-furnished interior, players entering the restaurant for the first time feel a little uneasy.

(Specific to certain PCs with psychic abilities) Any players with psionic abilities are especially unsettled. A sense of foreboding settles in over the players. It is hard to pinpoint with any degree of accuracy just why it seems "off" and "other" and "scary" all at the same time.

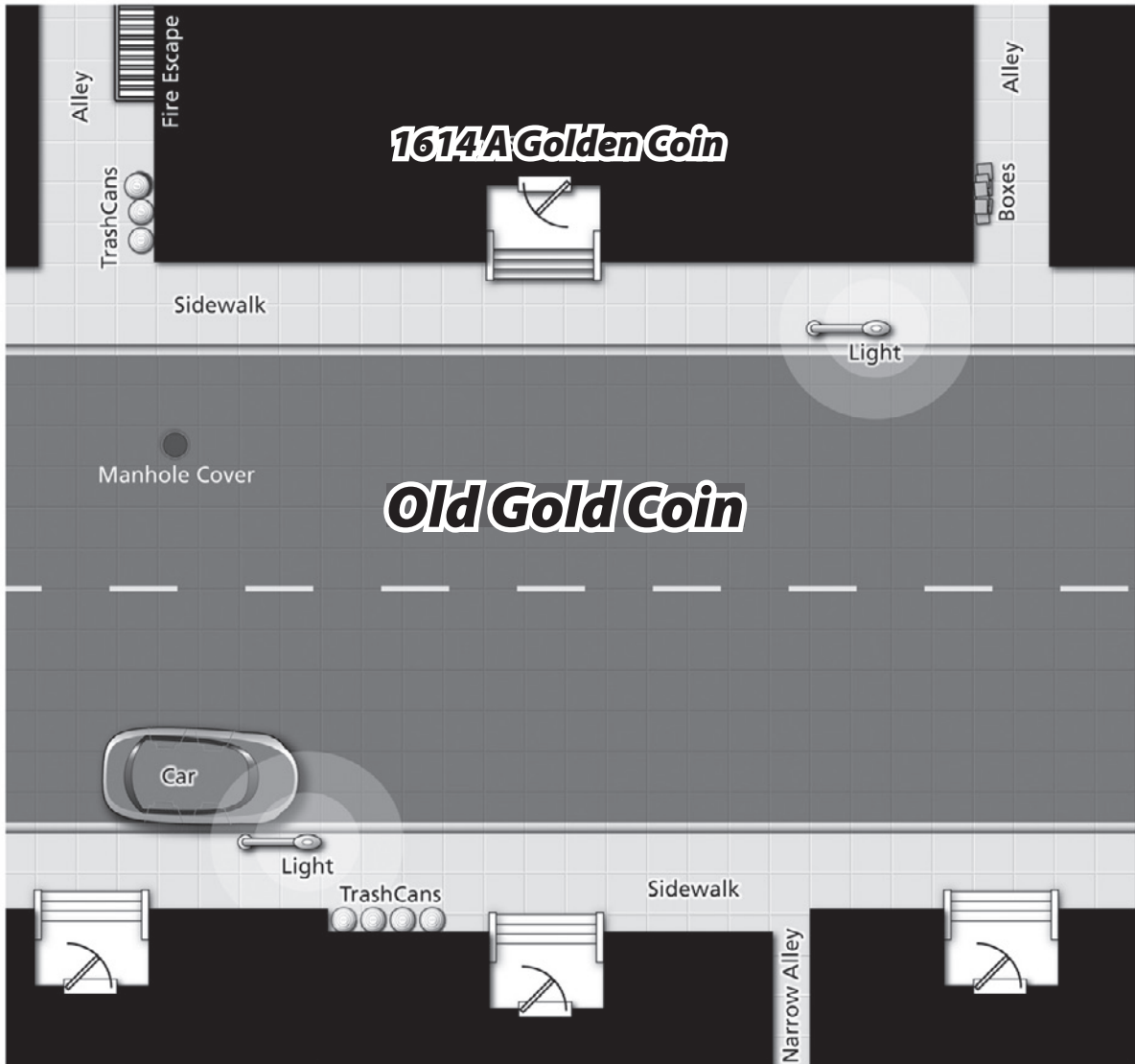
Referee Note: something to drop into descriptions after the players enter and have time to interact, either with a check of *Social Science (Psychology) (Education, +0)* or *Recon/ Investigate (Intelligence, +0)*: This sense of paranoia intensifies following interactions with the staff and players begin to sense that all is not right at the Yummy Dragon.

Players looking to question the staff find them immediately upset when questioned. Getting any information out of them requires a *Persuade (Intelligence or Social Standing, -3)* or *Diplomacy (Intelligence or Social Standing, -3)* skill check. Success results in the staff answering questions as quickly and with as little information as possible.

- ▷ They can reveal that Johnny Ito is a regular customer here and is friends with some of the night staff. No one has seen him for a few weeks however and the rumor is he moved off-planet for work.
- ▷ Takeo Batchai is indeed a server at the restaurant but is not scheduled to work again for a few days.
- ▷ One of the missing persons was a customer at the restaurant on the day of their disappearance. The Police came and questioned everyone, including Takeo Batchai but that is all anyone knows.

Apart from confirming the above information, the staff does not provide any additional data no matter what the Players roll. Pressing harder simply makes them shun the characters at first, then order them to leave.

Players will be unable to explore any areas of the restaurant other than the main dining room. The staff will prevent players from snooping around any other areas of the restaurant and will call the police if the players get belligerent or violent. It should quickly become clear that the players cannot learn more while the restaurant is open for business.



FINDING TAKEO BATCHAI:

In addition to Johnny Ito, the Wiley Notes also contain a reference to Takeo Batchai, a waitress who was questioned by police. If they decide to look her up, this would be the best place to start.

If the Players decide to check up on another of Wiley's leads, the waitress Takeo Batchai that was brought in for questioning. They can locate her address in Yamaguchi City's Golden Quadrangle neighborhood.

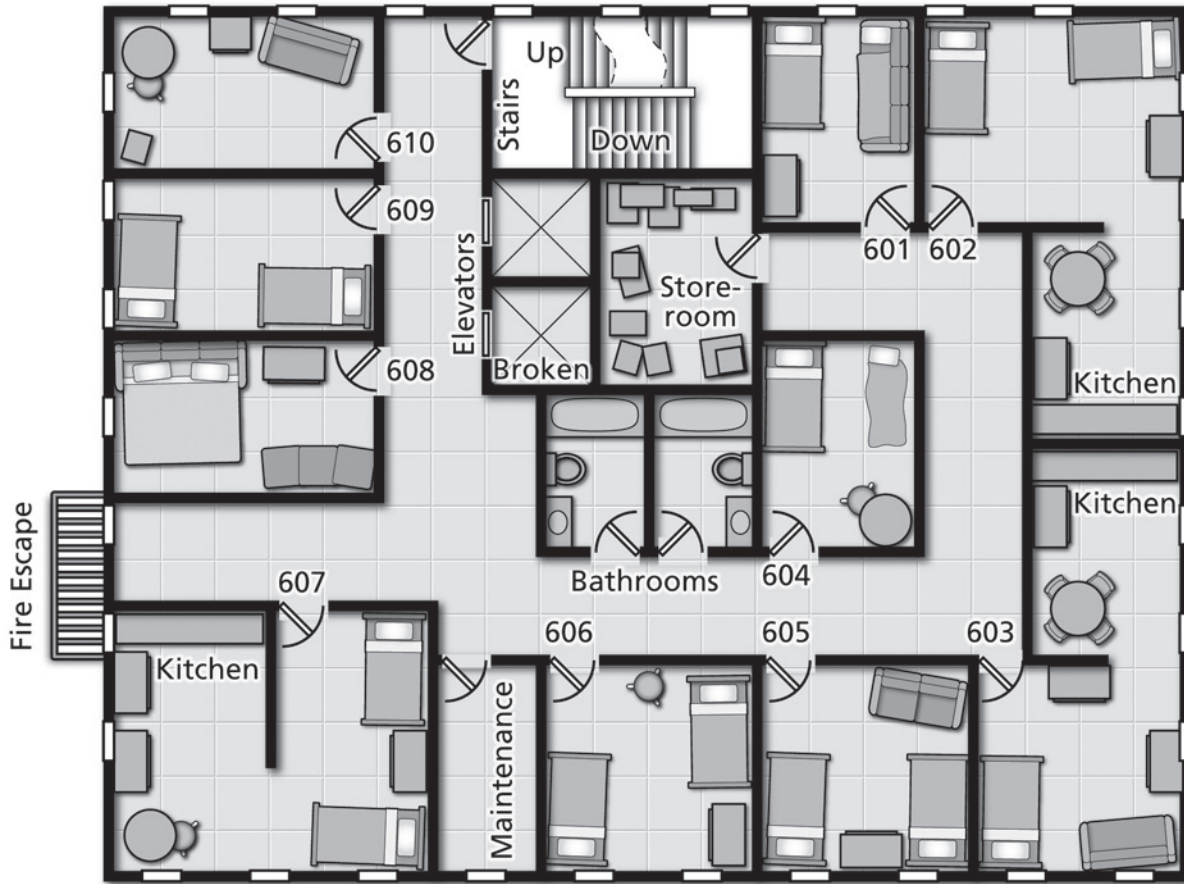
Online: Data records for Takeo Batchai indicate that she was a waitress at the Yummy Dragon and Mandarin House restaurants in Yamaguchi city, working only part time in both. She resides in Apartment 602 of 1614 A Golden Coin Street, Yamaguchi City (which is low-to-medium level housing in the Quadrangle Neighborhood). Her

image is available through Wiley's notes: she is a not unattractive woman of mixed oriental heritage who appears to be somewhere in nearing middle-age. In the photo Wiley has in his notes, she has her hair piled high on her head and a bun at the top in Pseudo-Geisha style.

The Interrogation: Talking with the investigating officer reveals that he brought her in because she was a nervous wreck when they started to investigate the disappearance of Ronald Choi, one of the victims of the Yamaguchi Ripper. Choi had been last seen leaving the Yummy Dragon (he was the same victim that was last seen there) in the company of Takeo Batchai. Other witnesses said that he seemed drunk and they seemed amorous together. When the Police started to ask her questions however, Miss Batchai got very nervous and this triggered the officer to hold her over. Ultimately, she would not budge and when

Part One: Honor Bound

Sixth Floor



Batchai's Building



her lawyer came, the officer had to release her since there was nothing more than a hunch that indicated her involvement. Eventually, Takeo fell off the radar. The officer also is very specific: he noted her place of work and did not erase it at any time (which means someone else got into the Kansas City Police Department Records and did so themselves).

Looking her up: Miss Batchai's address is easily established but not as easily tracked down. The Golden Coin seems to double back on itself and actually comprises more than one level of the street. The players may first end up in the Commercial side of the street (above ground) but they are quickly confused since the addresses don't line up at all. If they ask around, a Kancian directs them to "Old Gold Coin," which is the original (now sublevel) street.

Old Gold Coin is typical of the Understreet levels of Yamaguchi City, a warren of shadows and weird spaces that have become trapped under a layered over section of the megopolis. The

streets here are lit all of the time as light only filters in occasionally and with the ultimate of effort. The greenish lamps are designed to burn for years with the least amount of energy possible casting a ghostly greenish pallor over everything.

Traffic on Old Gold Coin is not as active as it is in the topside portion of the city. But oddly it is here that much of the residential sections are located. Most people either stay inside when they are here or take to quickest fastest route to the surface.

1614 A is a low-rise building that was once probably a middle-to-high income building. There is a security system at the front vestibule beside the door that operates on a camera system. [If pressed: Her apartment is either disconnected or she is not there.]

Players can either choose to use the time-honored "buzz someone else" technique or break inside by jimmying the lock or bypassing the electronics. Referees may make them roll or just have them

perform the proper actions. An old security door in a residential building is unlikely to cause the intrepid adventurers much trouble; just have them tell you how they plan on getting in and respond accordingly.

Once inside, the apartment is pretty standard. The lighting is better in the halls than it is on the street, but the place definitely shows signs of wear and tear. If there was any noise made (forcing the door open for example) a few neighbors will peek out, but for the most part there is little or nothing to stop the players from heading straight to Apartment 602.

There will again be no answer to the knocking on the door. Players located here however can make a *Recon (Intelligence, +1)* or *Investigate (Intelligence, 0)* skill check to hear faint noises inside, which sounds like a vidsystem left on. They will also, if the roll was an Exceptional Success, they also detect that there is an old blood smudge on the bottom side of the door handle.

Inside everything is in semidarkness. One lamp has been shattered, another has been knocked over and is casting most of its brilliance across the floor. In the corner, the vidsystem is playing softly while upside down, casting weird light across the otherwise darkened interior. Between these two light sources however (and whatever the players have with them), they can still easily see that Apartment 602 is in something of a state, with the furnishings and bric-a-brac scattered here and there. The signs of struggle are also found in the kitchen, as well as a good deal of blood.

The blood, if tested, are either Takeo's or will reveal "anomalous results" and the same bizarre DNA data as any other sample from any other Yamaguchi Ripper Scene.

YAMAGUCHI TAKE-OUT

Referee Note: *Referees should adjust the strength of the Takara team as they see fit to provide a decent workout for the characters.*

Visiting the restaurant and asking questions will cause the staff to grow suspicious of the players. The players are followed by low-ranking members of the Takara, one at a time taking turns so as to keep the players guessing. Very quickly after leaving the restaurant, the players will be followed: they can make a contested *Recon (Intelligence)*, or *Streetwise (Intelligence, -2)* skill check against the *Stealth 3* (No Characteristic DM)

of the Takara. Success indicates that the player has detected someone following them. If the Players are still in the Oriental District, these checks are harder, add an additional -1 DM to them. If the Referee considers the area "crowded", they are even harder to detect: add another -1 DM.

Stage One, Stalking their Prey: Before the attack, the Takara team will try to follow the players, sizing them up for the kill. At first, there are a few different individuals following them in sequence (which is what creates the initial penalty on the skill checks). If the players confront the person following them, the stalker will attempt to flee, avoiding capture at all costs. Once the Players head into a lightly populated area, or If the players do not immediately return to the restaurant and/or if the Players do not appear to notice they are being followed, the Takara launch an attack against the group (Stage Two).

Stage Two, Sneak Attack: When the Takara attack, they attempt to capture or kill the players, attacking them when they are alone. If the Takara cannot take the players separately, they attack them as a group, attempting to inflict as much damage to the players as possible and warn them off from their investigation.

The attack itself comes at night, or if in one of the Hive areas, at any time. The Takara attempt to close in on the players' location as quietly as possible and will instigate the computer program that cuts off the video feeds. If the PCs have someone riding shotgun for them on the Net, they can get something of a "heads up" on the attack as the video feeds go dark.

Takara Stalker (A, brawny & powerful)

STR: 10(+1) **DEX:** 7 **END:** 11(+1) **INT:** 7 **EDU:** 6 **SOC:** 5

Skills: Gun Combat (Specialty 2), Melee (Blade 2), Recon 2, Stealth 3, Streetwise 2,

Equipment: Hvy Ritual Knife (d6+3+STR DM), Autopistol (3d6-3) and either Shotgun (4d6) or SMG ((3d6, Recoil: 1, Auto: 4) Armored clothing (AV: 5),

Takara Stalker (B, lithe and lean)

STR: 7 **DEX:** 10(+1) **END:** 9(+1) **INT:** 7 **EDU:** 6 **SOC:** 5

Skills: Athletics (Coordination) 2, Gun Combat (Specialty 2), Melee (Blade 2), Recon 2, Stealth 3, Streetwise 1

Equipment: Hvy Ritual Knife (d6+3+STR DM), Autopistol (3d6-3) and SMG ((3d6, Recoil: 1, Auto: 4) Armored clothing (AV: 5),

Part One: Honor Bound

Again, the best place is as PCs go into or out of Takeo's apartment, but it can be used anywhere.

Sample Description:

The street is deserted, a rare event in Kansas City, but since the Yamaguchi Ripper abductions began it's becoming more-or-less common in the dead of night as more people huddle together for protection. Ironically, this means that there is a greater likelihood of running into a deserted street.

A pair of men turn the corner, breaking the spell. They are dressed in dark clothes and carry themselves with purpose, walking towards the players... (this is when they might get a call if anyone is watching for surveillance blackouts on their behalf, such as Diogenes)

The Takara in the front are simply there to allay the Player's fears and expect to be martyred for their Nest. The rest of the Takara are busy taking up positions all around the players. The Takara use a mix of close combat weapons and silenced pistols to try and kill the players. They are smart, they don't take any chances of getting caught and normally prefer stealth over brute force. This does not mean they cannot employ brute force, and

likely will in order to head off the threat that the players represent.

[Referee's Note: The Takara as presented here might not be powerful enough for your group. If this is the case, feel free to adjust them accordingly. Try not to make them too powerful, but definitely a threat.]

The Takara fight as a coordinated team, isolating and eliminating powerful players first before moving on to weaker ones. If the Takara suffer too many injuries or any casualties, they flee, running off into the night and to nearby vehicles to make a clean getaway. Pursuing players can attempt to follow them back to the restaurant. At least one member of the Takara team is recognized by the players as a staff member of the Yummy Dragon.

Stage Three (Optional), To the Victor... If the players capture one of the Takara who are either following or fighting them, they resist interrogation like a champ, threatening the players with death if they're not released. The Takara are fanatics and will never betray their brethren and all are willing to die for their cult. After a time, the Cultists becomes something like a ravening animal.

Takara Gatherers

STR: 7 **DEX:** 8 **END:** 10(+1) **INT:** 7 **EDU:** 6 **SOC:** 9(+1)

Skills: Athletics (Stamina) 1, Gun Combat (Specialty 1), Melee (Blade 2), Persuade 2, Recon 2, Seduction 2, Stealth 2, Streetwise 1

Equipment: Ritual Knife (d6+2), Bodypistol (3d6-3) Armored clothing (AV: 5)

The Gatherers are the Cults primary means of gaining sustenance. These are individuals that have been provided with pheromones that help attract prey. The pheromones themselves have to be employed for d6 minutes before they are effective, and can alter the brain chemistry of the target significantly. These are the few Takara that do not look scary, but they still feel "wrong" on first glance. After d6 minutes in proximity make an END check to avoid becoming affected. Normally, this provides a bonus to Seduction checks, but in combat it simply makes those affected hesitate to attack. Only against the Gatherers: lose the Initiative or take a -3 Targeting DM.

Takara Lay Cultists

STR: 7 **DEX:** 7 **END:** 8 **INT:** 6 **EDU:** 6 **SOC:** 6

Skills: Any one skill related to their "day job" at 2 plus, Gun Combat (specialty weapon) 1, Melee (Blade 1), Recon 2, Stealth 2, Streetwise 1

Equipment: Ritual Knife (d6+2), and either the Autopistol (3d6-3) or Shot gun (4d6) Jack (AV: 1)

Lay Cultists are not yet transformed, although they have become psychically linked to the Queen of the Nest (which makes them slightly more dangerous if they become severed from their mistress and go into a berserker frenzy)

The Butcher, Takara High-End Mutation

STR: 14(+3) **DEX:** 7 **END:** 12(+2) **INT:** 7 **EDU:** 6 **SOC:** 3 (-1)

Skills: Athletics (Coordination 1) (Strength 3), Melee (Natural Weapon 3), Recon 2, Stealth 2, Trade (Butcher) 3

Equipment: Hand-to-Hand (2d6+3+STR DM), Armored Skin (AV: 6) plus a Leather apron (Jack AV 1, total AV 7). His mutations also allow him abilities similar to IR Chameleon Technology and the Enhanced Vision Augmentation. He also has the Negative Mutations Light-Sensitive and Large. *See text on page to right.*

More Takara...

AFTER HOURS

The players will realize that the answers they're looking for may lie in the Yummy Dragon Restaurant and that they are unable to investigate while the restaurant is open for business. It will become necessary for the players to infiltrate the restaurant after hours and search for clues under the cover of darkness. Unfortunately the Takara are aware of them now and they lie in wait for the players to arrive.

Getting into the restaurant after hours requires the players to break in. They find that the locks and security systems of the restaurant are well-maintained and top of the line; particularly for an eating establishment in a so-so neighborhood. In order to get to the restaurant undetected, the players must make *Stealth (Dexterity, -1)* checks or else be spotted by the Takara that are monitoring the security systems. Players attempting to infiltrate the building must make an *Engineering/Mechanical (Dexterity, 0, 1-6 minutes)* or *Deception (Dexterity, -2, 10-60 seconds)* skill check to pick the locks with the proper tools. If the players have other Mechanical-related *Engineering* skills instead, they may use that as well with a -2. If the players have to use a found or improvised object instead of the right tools, apply a -2 DM to the check. Kindly Referees may even allow a *Mechanics* roll as a substitute; the locks are not electronic at all but entirely mechanical). Failure to infiltrate the restaurant quietly will alert the Takara inside, who will plan an ambush for the players. Marginal successes and blown checks are dead giveaways.

Inside the restaurant, players find a small group of Takara waiting for them. The small team of thugs is armed with bladed weapons and small arms such as pistols. If possible they will capture, but they have no problem with killing either. They do not want to use any more noise or force than is needed, so if the players are only armed with hand-to-hand weapons, the Takara will not use their firearms first. This is not a noble gesture, they still prefer their food live.

The Takara at the restaurant are led by a powerful creature called the Butcher; The Butcher works in the dark of night preparing the grisly meals served at the restaurant throughout the day. The Butcher has the same strange otherworldly appearance as the rest of the Takara, but is clearly some form of mutant with massive blade-like bony protrusions jutting from his massive forearms as well thick grayish skin. A massive individual, the Butcher leads the Takara in the restaurant to attack the players and will not give

up, fighting to the death. The rest of the Takara will flee if they players get the better of them and inflict significant damage on the thugs. Use the statistics for the Takara Hunters for some, with a few of the Gatherers and the Lay Cultists added in for flavor. Referees should again keep in mind that they will need to balance the players and the Takara.

Only after the players have eliminated the Takara are they free to search the restaurant. If any especially loud noises were made during the combat (such as gunshots), the police will respond in five minutes, giving the players only a short amount of time to investigate.

Further Leads

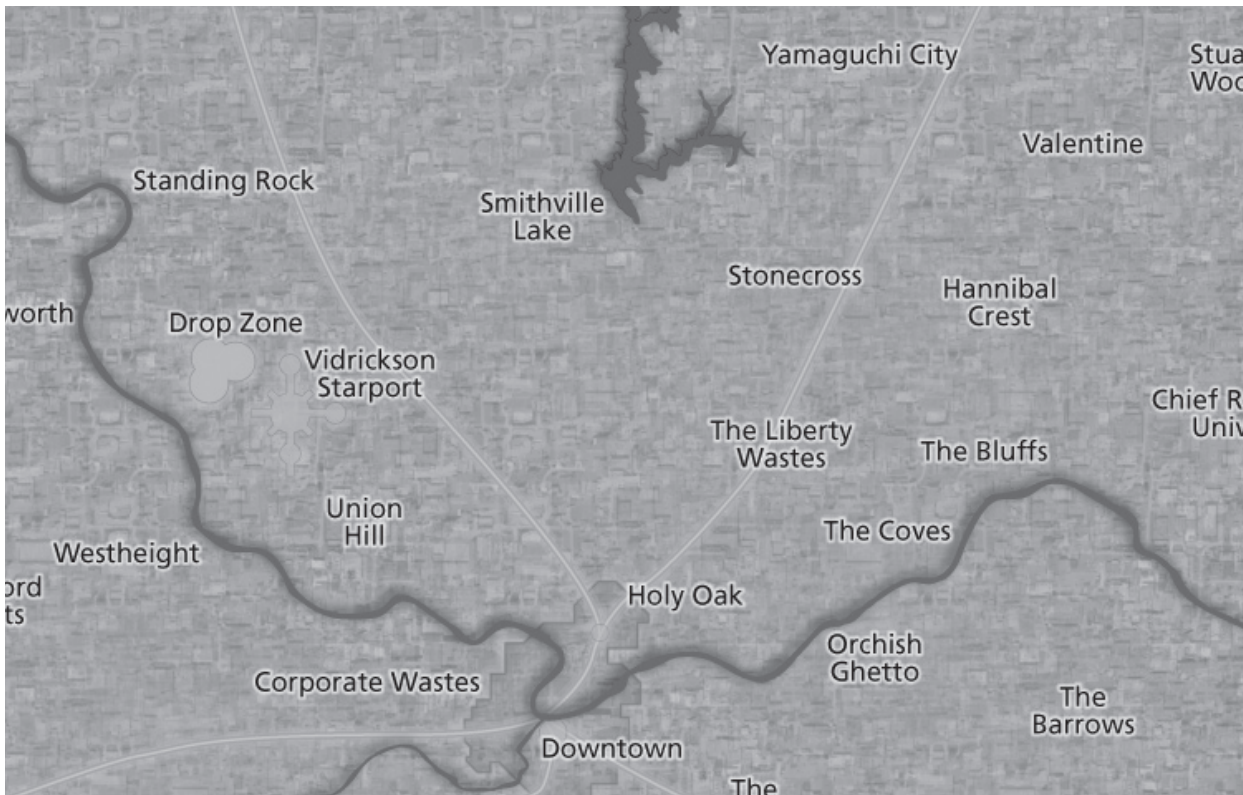
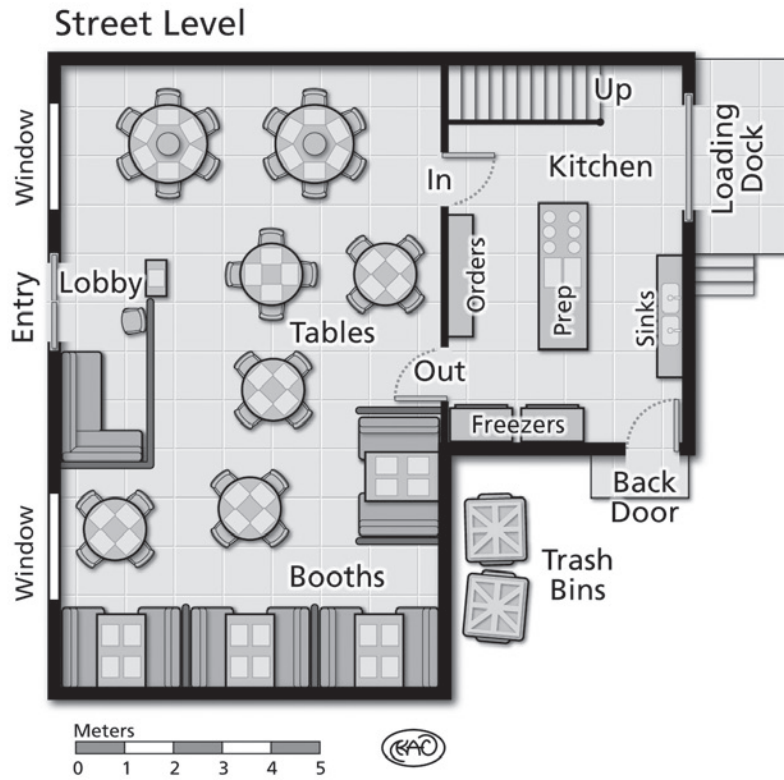
Once the Takara within the restaurant have been dealt with, the players can begin searching the place for clues. The two main areas of interest within the restaurant are the kitchen and the office and players searching those two locations can make *Investigate (Intelligence, +0, 1-6 minutes)* skill checks to reveal any of the clues listed below. Players may also attempt to break through the security on the restaurant's computer system, located in the office; doing so requires a *Computer (Intelligence, -2, 1-6 minutes)* skill check with success revealing some of the clues listed below.

Clues: The following clues can be gained by searching the kitchen or the office, as well as breaking into the restaurant's computer. Referees are free to reveal these to the players in any order as well as add their own, as they see fit.

- ▷ The restaurant is actually owned by a woman named Madame Xiang. Further investigation will reveal that Madame Xiang also owns the Bamboo Serenity geisha house.
- ▷ Daily deliveries of the 'House Special' are made to the Bamboo Serenity geisha house a short distance away.
- ▷ Meat Deliveries (Meat!) are made *from* the same address as the geisha house, although the system does not list the name of the supplier the address is the same. [**Referee's Note:** That means they are getting meat from and sending dinners back to the Bamboo Serenity. Also, real meat is very rare.]
- ▷ A recently delivered shipment of meat being prepared in the kitchen does not appear to match others in the restaurant. Further investigation will reveal that it is human flesh (and ultimately can be traced to one of the missing persons).
- ▷ Money from the restaurant is transferred to bank accounts that are also used by Bamboo Serenity geisha house.

YUMMY DRAGON

Chinese Restaurant



Organization Information; Optional Handout

WHO ARE THE TAKARA?

The Takara are a widespread group of cannibalistic cultists found across Terra/Sol and, perhaps, the Twilight Sector. Very few are aware of the cult's existence and those that do seem to view the Takara as nothing more than a minor threat. In fact, the Takara are engaged in a number of terrible activities whose sinister motives remain unknown.

The Takara were first identified by the Kansas City Bureau of Investigation in 2899 and classified as a 'malign organization of religious zealots'. The Takara were targeted by the KCBI organized crime task force for their involvement in a number of unexplained disappearances and they were quickly dispersed. A few years later, a similar cult was reported in the planetary capital of London and the Orion Security Service began to investigate widespread activities by the organization and its members all across Terra/Sol. Since that time a number of intelligence organizations throughout the Twilight Sector have reported encounters with similar cults; little has been done by the OSS or other organizations to discover the extent of the cult's influence or operations.

The KBI accumulated the most information regarding the Takara, though even this information is sadly lacking in details and has subsequently been suppressed. What they were able to determine is that the Takara are a tightly organized group of religious fanatics who follow an esoteric occult mythology and practice antiquated rituals and rites that they believe grant them power and favor with their gods. Many of these rituals require blood sacrifices, ideally drawn from unwilling human victims but the Takara occasionally use animal blood if pressed. Other Takara rituals involve the preparing and consumption of human flesh though the reasons behind this are unknown. No other organization known to the KBI practices such strange and gruesome activities, though few within the KBI are aware of the cult as it hasn't been active in Kansas City in nearly a century (or so it is thought).

In nearly every encounter with the Takara, the cult has been led by a matriarch or 'Mother' who seems to guide the actions of the cult as a whole as well as the lives of the individual members. Like other such organizations, the cult matriarch is often a charismatic and highly intelligent individual often holding a position of power outside the cult and usually with a great deal of resources and connections. The Takara seem almost completely reliant on the matriarch for guidance and were unable to function without her direction. In past encounters, the cult matriarch was directly responsible for every activity the cult performed and psychological advisors to intelligence organizations that have encountered the Takara liken the relationship between the cult members and the matriarch to some insects – when the 'queen' is removed, the 'hive' dies.

No one knows how the Takara recruit their members. Individual members of the Takara cults have come from all walks of life; there have been no common ties between any of the recorded members of these cults. What is known is that members almost completely forsake their old lives upon joining the cult, even going so far as to assume new identities in new locations. This has made tracking the members of the cults very difficult as most use false identities and almost no records from their past life can be found. Members of the Takara are utterly and totally loyal to the cult matriarch and no success has been made attempting to de-program former cult members. When these cults have been shut down, almost always requiring the death of the matriarch, the cult members seem to lose all motivation to live though few actively attempt suicide. Intelligence organizations have noted that the members of the Takara seem to share similar mutations and individuals known not to possess any mutations before joining the cult seem to develop mutations after their time with the Takara. Typical mutations found among the Takara include Physical Deformity, Light Sensitivity, Notable Strength, Endurance or Dexterity, Large and Psionic. Finally, nearly all members of the Takara seem to develop an almost nutritional need to feed on human flesh or blood.

The frequency of the appearance of the Takara throughout Terra/Sol and the Twilight Sector cannot be a coincidence. Though intelligence organizations seem unable or unwilling to recognize the threat the Takara present, many fringe organizations and conspiracy theorists believe they represent an active and malign influence on Terra/Sol. Whatever their true motivations, it is clear that the Takara are far more than a simple cult.

This information is for the Referee, but... While the Takara are a secret cult, this information does exist (but is still very hard to obtain). Referees may wish to allow the Players to access this information entirely if they obtain the KBI "Black File"...



PART I, ACT THREE: SILK AND BLOOD

The third and final Act reaches the climax of the story whereby the players investigate the Bamboo Serenity geisha house. Clues discovered at the Yummy Dragon Restaurant all point in the direction of the massage parlor and it is clear that the sinister activities taking place in Kansas City are centered on this location.

Using these encounters

The Objective for this portion of the adventure is to build towards the thrilling conclusion. Thus the scenes are arranged in the order they need to be presented. Players somehow **not** headed to the Bamboo Serenity after their discoveries in the Yummy Dragon are just not thinking real hard. If it should happen, and the players have not had their discussion with the Yakuza (**The Yakuza Offer**), the Yakuza can always take matters in hand. So as to “give” more information for the Players to help them along.

Referee Note: Sensitivity may be Warranted

Some Referees will be uncomfortable, or know that their players will be uncomfortable, in ‘allowing’ the Takara to victimize children prior to the PC’s involvement (as is revealed at the end of the Act). The choice of victim was made to emphasize the utter inhumanity of the Takara (and indeed their allies, the OSS which have been driven well beyond the pale by their association with this foul cult).

It is easy enough to circumvent or ignore the “Nursery” aspects of this Act, but the Second Part of the Campaign is designed to delve deeper into that very aspect of the cult and their allies. Still, it can be done if the Referee is willing to perform a little more effort in setting up some alternatives. Instead, use victims of another sort entirely: such as hospitalized Volt Junkies or individuals who have been placed into a medically induced coma. This way the nature of the victim (weak, defenseless) still underscores the foul depravity of the Takara but will not trigger the automatic ‘gut response’ some may evidence over the fact of pedophagy. Doing so can even tighten the storyline, as this could indeed be why Rosen knew more than he was willing to tell about the Takara. More on this can be found in the sidebar on Page 58 in Part 2.

BAMBOO SERENITY

The Bamboo Serenity massage parlor is a well known geisha house throughout Kansas City's Oriental District. Clients go in for a quiet and relaxing massage as well as to arrange private deals with the staff. The Kansas City Police have done little to shut down this den of vice as the head mistress, Madame Xiang, provides kickbacks in the form of money and free services for police

How Rude!

There might be a timeline element here if the referee want to incorporate this into the adventure: If the players show up within 10-15 minutes of their entering the Restaurant, a few of the stragglers from the house are being hustled out the back door on the pretense of an imminent police raid. The players might notice an excess of foot and/or vehicle traffic coming out of the areas, Kancitians who are half-dressed or look like they dressed in the dark. Which is more or less accurate. While casual questioning is doubtful to elicit ready answers, a persuasive and/or threatening character might get one of these ousted johns to give them tidbits of information such as "they started getting people out in no uncertain terms five minutes ago" and "I saw a pair of men with weapons, I don't know what kind of raid they were preparing for, but I doubt it's the local cops"

decide to go to the authorities and have them do the dirty work; this course of action will prove quite unsuccessful as the police and the KBI will require more concrete evidence of wrongdoing on the part of the geisha house and tipping off the police will result in the Takara getting wind of an impending raid, which will cause them to close up shop and leave. Intrepid players will seek to discover the truth for themselves and to do so they must enter the house.

Description:

The house itself is a small, three story affair decorated in an old oriental style and stands out among the more modern buildings in the district. The building has been used as a massage parlor and geisha house for decades

– the same length of time the Yummy Dragon Restaurant has been in business. All outward appearances reveal a simple yet elegant building.

A closer look, requiring a *Recon (Intelligence, -2)* or *Investigate (Intelligence, -2)* skill check, will reveal very modern security systems such as cameras, security doors and armed bodyguards making regular patrols of the house and the street/allies outside. Scrutiny will also reveal that the house is primarily empty, the inhabitants being tipped off about the player's attack on the restaurant.

Players taking a sneaky approach to infiltrating the house will need to sneak past the security systems and the armed guards in order to get close; doing so requires a *Stealth (Dexterity, -2)* skill check to avoid detection. Players sneaking in can also make *Athletics: Coordination (Dexterity, +0)* skill checks to climb the outside of the building to the second or third floors. Players attempting to infiltrate the building must make an *Engineering/Electronics (Dexterity, 0, 1-6 minutes)* or *Deception (Dexterity, -2, 10-60 seconds)* skill check to pick the locks. Failure to avoid detection tips off the Takara as to how and where the players are entering the house, giving them time to prepare an ambush against the players.

Description:

Inside the building, the players find the lights dimmed and the house quiet. Most of the staff and any clients have been rushed out before the players arrived and only a handful of patrolling guards lie in wait for the players. The second and third floors are each made up of a half a dozen rooms used by the staff to entertain clients; little of value can be found in these rooms or on these floors. The first floor contains a large entry hall as well as some large recreation rooms for clients to sit and relax, have a drink and spend time with the staff. Also on the first floor is Madame Xiang's office and bedroom, both of which are locked.

Two sets of two guards patrol the house, one on the first floor and one patrolling the second and third floors. The guards are armed with autopistols and shotguns as well as knives and concealed armor. They have been ordered to kill anyone entering the house. If the players are discovered, the guards respond with deadly force. Once anything starts to happen, particularly gunfire or the sounds of a struggle, the guards from other floors rush to respond to the source of the disturbance. Referees should note that this makes

the guards susceptible to feints and diversions. The guards are fiercely loyal to Madame Xiang and know that retreat and surrender is not an option; they will fight to the death.

There is little of value or interest in the house itself, though the players may be able to find some trinkets among the staff rooms that are worth a small amount of cash. Searching Madame Xiang's office reveals more information, but little that is terribly incriminating in a legal sense (for her, although others in City Hall might start to get very nervous). Players searching the office should make *Investigate (Intelligence, +0, 1-6 minutes)* skill checks to discover a few scant clues; players can also break into Madame Xiang's computer, requiring a *Computer (Intelligence, -1, 1-6 minutes)* skill check to likewise discover a few minor clues.

Of the clues that can be gained in the office, players can discover:

- ▷ Further information linking the Bamboo Serenity and the Yummy Dragon Restaurant
- ▷ Client lists revealing some prominent names in Kansas City politics and law enforcement
- ▷ Correspondences with orphanages located in London and future travel records to and from London for Madame Xiang and some of her staff. This includes four "open" (as in unassigned to a particular person) tickets to London on a flight that will leave tomorrow afternoon and arrive in London by early morning (local time). Along with the tickets is a brief memo: "Meet with Mattias, Cauldron, 11 AM" There were also return flight tickets for the following day after 2 p.m.. There appeared to be no hotel or other accommodations tickets.

Of key importance however (in terms of the adventure progressing forward) is the presence of a hidden door in the office. This can be discovered by players searching the room (as above) or making a *Recon (Intelligence, -2)* skill check to notice something is amiss. The door is well hidden behind a bookcase that is easily moved. The secret door leads to a narrow staircase going down into tunnels located beneath the house. The Referee should read the following as soon as the players open the door:

As the players open the hidden door they feel a short blast of cold air. Mere seconds later, a bloodcurdling scream echoes up from below.

The player's direction should be clear from that point forward.

THE NEST

After infiltrating the house and discovering a hidden door leading to tunnels below the geisha house, the players descend into the depths of the basement. The tunnels and rooms beneath the house have existed for decades and are well-maintained by the Takara.

Description:

The tunnels appear to have been carved straight into the ground and have been walled over by thick cement. Adequate lighting is present throughout the tunnels and the air is clean even if somewhat cold and dank. One thing that players notice immediately is that between the thick concrete and the tight confines, all of the noise made here seems magnified with a slight echo.

The footsteps of the players will be a dead giveaway for anyone at the bottom of the stairs due to the aforementioned echoes off the cold concrete walls; this doesn't mean however that they cannot try. Impose a -1 penalty to all *Stealth* skill checks while in the tunnels. Once the Players commit to taking the tunnels down into the bowels of the Takara nest, describe the following:

Following the narrow stairway passage beneath the house downward, you come to an opening which has no door at the base of the stairway itself. The chamber beyond looks to be large and poorly lit. As they approach however, the air is fouled by the smell of fresh blood.

There are no traps or other gimmicks that impede transit from the passage to the Open Chamber, it is after all used as a means of transit, smoothly going back and forth for the Takara that dwell within.

Beyond the opening is a large central chamber (roughly 13m x 19m) with two large double doors on either side and a plastic strip door directly on the opposite side of the entrance.

The space is lit by flickering lights that come from braziers on either side of the chamber, They give the place a weird appearance.

[Referee Note: they also impose a -1 on non-melee attacks, in addition to any range mods]

The walls and floor of this room are sprayed with fresh blood and the stench of it fills the nostrils. A small drain in the center of the floor has collected a large pool of blood and gore. Rivulets of crimson stretch back to the center of the chamber.

In the center of the room is a metal table, on which the deceased body of a young man stretches out obscenely

The Queen's Court

The characters will quickly be able to defeat Madame Xiang if she is alone, and she is not. She is however a bit unprepared, as she was busy "tidying up" when the Players arrived. As she heard the players coming down the stairs, she commanded her remaining cultists to hide among the alcoves and passageways. As soon as the characters walk in and look like they are going to attack, the cultists stream in and attack as well. These are not true combatants, but they are (a) attackers to draw attention away from the Queen and (b) A terrific nuisance. Given their statistics and weapons, they will likely not take out the characters, but they can allow Xiang to escape or get a fatal strike in on a PC.

No set number of these cultists are provided. The Referee should gauge their number based on the number of PC's (at least one per PC) and the PCs health and ability level (a group of unwounded PCs might get two or three times their number, which is about the maximum there should be in this encounter). They are not fighting for a cause, or even self-preservation. They fight on behalf of their Queen, and are psychically linked to her as if they were extensions of her will.

If the PCs manage to kill the Queen, the remaining cultists go into seizures. Anyone with Psionics can feel the backlash as well, although they will not themselves seize or feel any other physical effects beyond bloodshot eyes or a nosebleed. Very quickly into their seizures, the cultists' hearts literally burst, blood emerging from their mouths, eyes, ears and whatever wounds they have. If the Queen manages to escape, they become hopelessly mad, their eyes glazed over and their minds literally fried (this however makes them somewhat more dangerous, as they no longer feel any pain whatsoever and will fight past where normal people would just decently expire. In game terms, should the Queen escape, cutting off their psychic connection to her, they receive an additional 5 points to absorb damage and descend into hopeless madness. Referees should note how even if they are mortally wounded, their bodies ripped nearly apart, they keep coming. Use Lay Cultist and Gatherers for the Court.

Madame Xiang, Kansas City Queen

STR: 10(+1) **DEX:** 12(+2) **END:** 11(+1)

INT: 9 (+1) **EDU:** 8 **SOC:** 9 (+1) **PSI:** 12(+2)

Skills (relevant to scene): Athletics (Coordination 2), Melee (Blade 3), Stealth 3, Telepathy 4

Equipment: Monomolecular Ritual Knife (2d6+3+STR).

Modifications: Her skin acts as armor (AV: 3), her Kimono is also armored (AV: 3, total 6). Enhanced vision and her Fangs do 2d6+3 damage (3 pt Armor Piercing). She is amped by natural endorphins that mimic the effects of Combat Drug (see **Traveller Main Book**, pg 94)

[Referee Note: this matches the description Stephen Wiley.]

Standing behind him, with a strangely curved blade on one hand aloft that drips with blood, is a small woman with a delicate frame and a pale complexion. Her long black hair is tied up and she wears a red silk kimono. A red silk veil covers most of her face and players can only see her dark, black eyes. She appears to be waiting for them.

[Referee Note: Once they walk inside] *On either side of the entrance to the chamber are identical alcoves. Inside of these are two more flickering braziers and a low prayer table. Several objects lie on the table that range from the commonplace (incense) to bizarrely wrought stone idols and wicked-looking knives.*

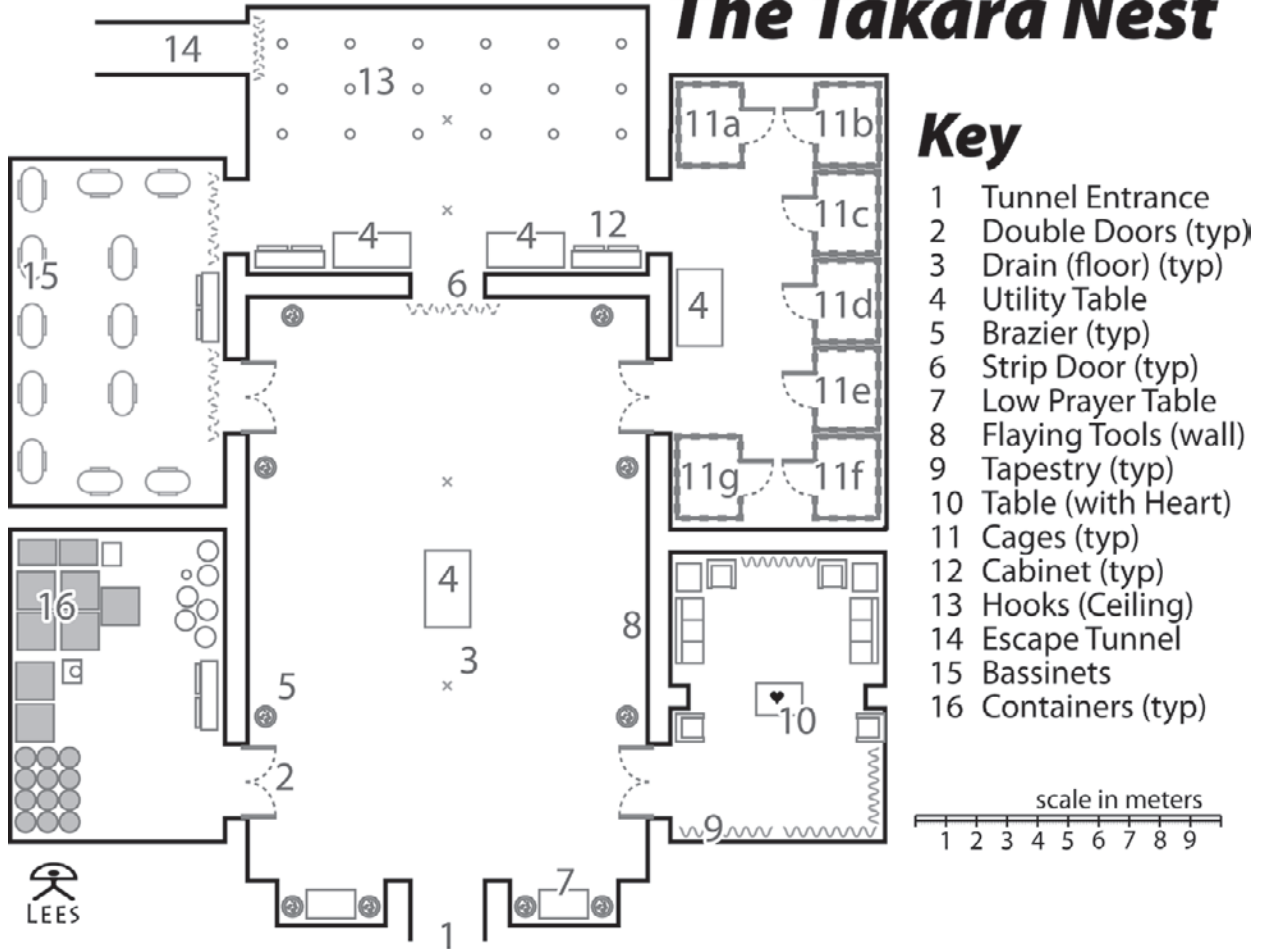
This woman is of course Madame Xiang, the Takara local hive queen, and she is waiting for them to enter. If the players shoot at her from the doorway, keep in mind the dim lighting applies a DM of -1 to ranged attacks and from their perspective she has half-cover for a further -1 DM on top of any range modifiers that apply. She is also not stupid, if they raise their weapons, she will try to avoid being shot by dodging behind the cover (thus giving a -2 DM for cover rather than -1).

During combat, or players can make a *Recon (Intelligence, -1)* skill check to catch sight of a strange deformity hidden beneath her veil – her tongue appears to be more a tentacle than a typical human tongue and her teeth are very long and razor sharp. If Madame Xiang is killed or captured, the body combusts (see below), but not at once; any PC who is examining her even casually will take note of this deformity (once dead or unconscious, the tentacle-tongue sort of lolls out).

Upon seeing the players, Madame Xiang simply waits as the body of Stephen Wiley oozes blood onto the metal table and from there onto the floor. When the PCs move into the main chamber, the remaining cultists emerge from the various side rooms and alcoves (See sidebar to the left).

At that point, Xiang will also launch herself at them with her deadly blade; she has realized by now that the players are here to stop her activities and that they cannot be bargained with. She fights with preternatural skill and speed, reacting far faster than a human being should. Madame Xiang does not fight to the death, if she is injured she will attempt to flee further into the tunnels, eventually reaching the city sewers. If cornered, she will continue fighting and will do anything in her power to avoid capture.

The Takara Nest



MISSING PERSONS

If Killed, or if captured despite these efforts, her body will begin the wrench – either flat on the ground if she was killed or tugging against whatever grip or bonds in which she is placed. After a few moments (whether or not she is conscious or even alive at the time):

Xiang's body begins to bloat. The skin distorts, then splits at the seams as her entire form shudders and flops about. Finally she erupts in foul stinking flames as something deep within her body touches the open air and is rejected as if by nature itself. Wreathed in flame, the body droops down, seeming to collapse slightly in on itself, only to begin expanding again with a popping and hissing sound...

Anyone not in full flight at this point potentially becomes a statistic as the 6d6 explosion rips through the small chamber.

After combat, the players can explore the grisly Nest further.

Players exploring the Nest beneath the geisha house find a macabre collection of chambers, each more shocking than the last. Each chamber reveals more and more about the sinister Takara and the lengths of their gruesome activities.

Referee Note: All of the following could technically be considered description with mild editing.

A large room contains a number of cages meant to contain human victims (and appropriately sized). The cages are dirty, covered in human waste and dried blood. Only two of the cages have people in them, but it is clear that Madame Xiang murdered them before the players arrived. Both these people match the remaining persons reported missing. One of them is Amanda Foster.

One room looks like a slaughterhouse in every sense of the word. From the player's investigations it becomes clear that prisoners are taken from the cages, killed in the center chamber and then moved into the slaughterhouse for 'processing'. Here, the victims are stripped of their flesh,

Part One: Honor Bound

which is clearly packaged and stored in a nearby refrigerator. Boxes in this room match those found at the Yummy Dragon Restaurant and it quickly becomes clear that the Takara slaughter their victims and harvest their flesh to be eaten later. The remains of at least four people can be found in this room and the refrigerator. One of these is Takeo Batchai, who looks as if she was severely tortured prior to being killed and carved up. On several of the victims, particularly Batchai's, there are odd circular wounds, which look like something tubular burrowed into the flesh.

A strange room is ornately decorated, its walls covered with velvet tapestries depicting various strange scenes of stars and planets. A large plush rug covers the floor of this room and a number of bizarre artifacts can be found here such as silver bowls, plates and cups, curved ornamental blades and strange-smelling incense. On a small plate in the center of the room is a human heart that, upon closer inspection, has a large bite taken out of it, but the dentition marks are all wrong for a normal human (bright players should connect the kind of teeth they saw on Madame Xiang).

By far the most shocking room located beneath the geisha house is the nursery. A heavy metal door leads into a large room lined with nearly a dozen small cribs. Immediately upon opening the door the players hear the cries of children and it seems as though this room has been sound-proofed to prevent these cries from being heard throughout the tunnels and the house above. Approximately eight small children, ranging in age from a few months to two years old, lie in the cribs some crying and screaming for attention.

A variety of items used for caring for children can be found throughout the room including baby food and diapers. Each crib has a piece of paper framed next to it and these appear to be adoption certificates for




each child. Some cribs are empty, though still have certificates next to them; the children are nowhere to be found and players can assume these children are also used for food by the Takara.

Closer inspection will reveal that all the children here, as well as those missing, came from one of two orphanages located in London. This nursery places the players within a much larger plot, one that spans the entire planet of Terra/Sol.

THE NEXT SCENARIO: LONDON CALLING

Following the incident at the geisha house, the players have a number of options on how to proceed. The remains discovered beneath the house have closed all the missing persons and murder cases plaguing Kansas City. If the authorities are called in, the player's actions are lauded as heroic if not reckless and the police and KBI begin their investigation. The children are taken to orphanages around Kansas City to be found homes with loving families. The truth of the events in Kansas City is heard across the Republic of the Plains and, indeed, Terra/Sol; a strange cult of cannibals has been found and eliminated.

The presence of the children beneath the geisha house however leaves many questions unanswered. How could a murderous cult of cannibals possibly adopt so many children? What was Madame Xiang's relationship to the orphanages in London? Is it possible that other such cults exist across Terra/Sol and are engaged in similar adoptions? Though local authorities promise to investigate further, a planetary conspiracy will ensure that these investigations never bear fruit. Only the players' independent investigations will prove to uncover the truth behind these questions.

SubAtomic Air Services 							
Class/Classe	First		Name/Nom	OPEN (956-98-B-6589)			
Flight/Vol	47KZ KC/ROP-LON SUBORB	Time/Huere	6PM (local ROP)	Seat & Class/Place et Classe	31A/FIRST		
Date/Date	Wed, Sep 7 91	Gate/Porte	S-127	Seat/Place	31A	To/Destination	London Transit Hub
From/De	Kansas City MetroAir	To/Destination	London Transit Hub	Arrival Time (Local)	10:30 AM		
Name/Nom	OPEN -- act=#956-98-B-6589						
Boarding Pass/Carte d'accès à bord			If It's Good It's SubAtomic! 				

PART TWO: LONDON CALLING

Note: None of the information presented in this chapter is common knowledge.

THE STORY THUS FAR

What the Players already know...

After tracking the activities of the Kansas City cult behind the Yamaguchi Ripper slayings, and subsequently stopping the cultists, the players discovered a number of small children being raised by the cult. Records from the cult indicate the children were adopted from two different orphanages located in the planetary capital of London and that the cult has been involved in similar adoptions for years.

What lay beneath...

In truth, the orphanages are involved in a number of illegal activities, all covered up by the Orion Security Service (OSS), a clandestine organization run by the Orion government. At the behest of the OSS, the orphanages in question are in the business of brokering out children as the OSS sees fit. Children are collected by the orphanages from all over Terra/Sol and then adopted out to a variety of individuals in the service of the OSS. None outside the OSS are aware of these bizarre and detestable activities. With any luck on the part of the players, they soon will and that knowledge alone will put a stop to it.

London Locations

- 1: Victoria Central Transit Hub
- 2: Witch's Cauldron
- 3: Parkhurst Arcology
- 4: Northwoods Orphanage
- 5: Alexandria Orphanage

Having uncovered information regarding the adoptions by the Takara of Kansas City, the players travel to London in the hopes of discovering why such a vile group would be allowed to adopt so many children from these orphanages.





PART II, ACT ONE: ORPHANS

The players have come to London to look into the adoption of nearly a dozen children by a vile cult of cannibals in Kansas City. Evidence discovered in Kansas City leads players to investigate two large orphanages in the planetary capital of London.

In the first scene of the act, the players arrive in London and begin either by investigating the orphanages or in trying to forestall the meet with 'Mattias'.

Using these encounters

The Objective for this portion of the adventure is to end with the players having some of the local (London) information they need to proceed, but being warned off by the OSS.

For Referees looking for the simplest, most direct method (or the fastest for Convention-style play where everything must be accomplished within a single tight session), use the following scenes in the following (approximate) order: **Getting to London** (note if they have attracted the Takara's attentions) > **Legwork at the Orphanages** (to give them something to do) > **Men in Black** (to finish this scene out). Again, this is not the only way to proceed and after the Part One Adventure, Players may want to pursue the Mattias angle themselves. If time is of the essence, referee's may substitute Mattias with the legwork at the Orphanages, then have the Men in Black descend on them and warn them off.

Referees are also reminded to hand the players the Information Sheet from the Player Inserts Section. This is commonly available information any resident of Terra/Sol either knows or can easily procure.

Referee Note: Arrival Times and Horrible things oh my!

As noted in "Getting to London's" subsection on "Setting up a Base of Operations", the players will arrive in London without weapons if they use commercial travel, or weapons that will need to be checked in even if they are themselves legally entitled to carry them. Even if the players use their own ship to get to London, there are strict legal restrictions on gun ownership in the Federal Enclave as a whole. This means that using the "Meeting with Mattias' scene will involve unarmed players (Shock! Horror!), Or they will have to blow it off. For referees who feel this is critical and know their players well, feel free to move the date back to the day following their arrival.



A Slice of London

London, the planetary capital, is a megopolis whose urban sprawl extends Kilometers in all directions outside the city proper. London's center is filled with towering skyscrapers and arcologies, and the constant hum of air and ground traffic. Home to millions of people, the city streets of London are choked with crowds at all times.

Players unfamiliar with such a big city will find themselves a bit overwhelmed, especially those from the small towns of the Republic of the Plains. Even players that have been to big cities will take some time to get used to the sheer size of the capital. Players can access basic information about the city such as maps, methods of transportation, etc using their computers and accessing public information sites across the internet.

By comparison, Kansas City was planned out as a city, not a megacity or megopolis. At the time of its construction, it had not even yet been decided whether the location would be the capital of the Republic of the Plains or not. Thus, a city of perhaps seven or eight million was envisioned, not the Forty-Three million that now inhabit it. This made Kansas City something of a patchwork, and contributed to the "organic" feel of the place in both good and bad ways.

London is different. This is a place that was planned not for a few million, but potentially for hundreds of millions. Right now it doesn't have that many people, not even by a third, but it has plans for them anyway. As a result, arcologies were built into the design of the city from the very start (rather than evolving later as they have in Kansas City). Underground networks and mass transit was sandwiched between functioning Industrial sub-layers so that the building materials for the labyrinth would be close at hand.

London today has 10 major arcologies, as well as a huge number of skyscrapers in the Valleys and those areas where the underground bedrock would not tolerate the construction of such massive structures. While they have major underground sections (in the sub-layers of the city), these are not the Undercities of Kansas City or New York. They are also not haphazardly designed out and planned.

When describing London, you need to think *vertical*.

GETTING TO LONDON

Players can reach London in a number of ways, (mostly Victoria Central Transport Hub) although this is not crucial to the adventure it might have an impact on how the game unfolds...

- ▷ If the players are working for a larger organization, such as the Kansas Bureau of Investigations or even a criminal organization such as the Yakuza, the organization the players work for can arrange for transportation to London.
- ▷ Players working independently will have to acquire their own means of reaching London, usually by plane. Purchasing them is hardly expensive (approximate cost for one way trips on the suborbital from KC to London are only around 750cr).
- ▷ The tickets which the Takara 'Queen' had in her office were "open" tickets, not designated to anyone in particular. The players could just as easily use those tickets as purchase their own to get to London.
- ▷ Players taking commercial means of transportation may have difficulty transporting weapons and other such goods, depending on the legality of the items in question. The journey to London from Kansas City is a quick one and players can reach their destination in a short period of time

What the Players have to go on:

There are three pieces of critical evidence that the players have to work with that have London connections:

- ▷ Along with the tickets they found to London was a brief memo: "Meet with Mattias, Cauldron, 11 AM" No date was mentioned, but the flight was to arrive in London by 10:30 AM local time. There were also return flight tickets for the following day after 2 p.m.. There appeared to be no hotel or other accommodations tickets.
- ▷ They also have the names of the Orphanages that the kids came from, The Northwoods Orphanage and the Alexandria Orphanage.
- ▷ Shadowborn's Murderer Revanche is also located in London. Revanche is a Net Pilot Assassin for hire used by the OSS for "cleaner" jobs and the like. This makes it difficult for Criminal Organizations such as the Yakuza to touch him for fear of beginning a conflict with the organization.

- ▷ **[Referee's Note:** This is actually little more than a rumor, although individual Referee's may want to develop this part of the adventure to add some of their own plot twists. Revanche works for the OSS as a sort of digital version of the classic Cleaner. He's scary, but not invulnerable. Anyone of this caliber in his field though, works smart and has contingency plans to facilitate escape.]

Of Special Note:

If the players use the Open tickets that were pilfered from Madame Xiang, the Takara living in London will spot them and keep tabs on them immediately. Otherwise, detection will depend on how much of Act I (and more importantly the players role in it) is known by the public or by officials (which they also have their hooks in as the players ought to have realized already).

Despite being of the same foul character and degenerate faith, the Takara of London are far more cautious than the minions of Madame Xiang, They are less likely to force some sort of conflict unless they have to. Having lost one Nest, the Takara are in no hurry to lose another; the Queen of this Nest is very old (even by 30th Century standards) and cautious.

Referees however might want to take note of this presence, and let the players make checks of their *Recon* or *Streetwise* against the *stealth* skill of one of their pursuers as a contested test. The Takara spotters have a *Stealth* skill of 3 on average, and work in teams of no less than three. Make one roll for both sides, add the scores of all players involved to determine if they notice the tail. The check nets the following results:

Marginal Success: There is something vaguely wrong. You aren't sure what precisely.

Average Success: Something is definitely wrong, and you don't like it. There is a face in the crowd that is reappearing now and again, maybe more than one. You cannot say for certain you are being followed, but it sure feels that way. The man is vaguely oriental, but more than that you really cannot say.

Exceptional Success: You know you are being followed by a 3-man team or more, at least two of whom you can now positively identify (probably more if you see them again).

Once the PCs are successful in noticing the tail, give the pursuer a chance to detect any changes in their behavior (unless there are no changes). If the players do something surreptitious, this will

lead to a contested *Stealth* vs. *Recon* check (the Takara Tail has *Recon* 2). If the Takara notice that they have been detected, they will back off for a time. They primarily want to ensure that they are not the target of the Players' investigation, they will only strike if they feel that this is the case (see *The Takara Response* sidebar).

Setting up a Base of Operations

When arriving in London, players must locate a place to stay; countless hotels are available throughout the city ranging from high-class penthouses to seedy dives. Players that are working for a larger organization may need to take time to contact other such organizations in the city and announce their presence. Players bringing legal weapons into the city will need to register them with federal law enforcement. The players will also need to procure means of transportation throughout their stay in the city; public transportation such as cabs is available but often unreliable and costly while rental vehicles are readily available. Traffic is another matter.

While players may want to immediately travel to the orphanages upon arriving or chase down one of their other leads, referees should ensure that the players have thought out everything they need to operate in London. It will take time for the players to establish themselves in the city before setting out on their investigations.

MEETING WITH MATTIAS

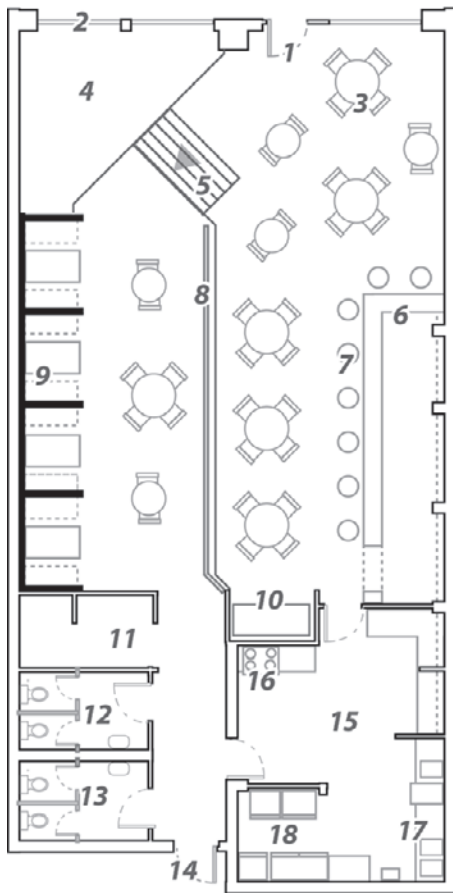
Clue: The only clue the characters have is: "Meet with Mattias, Cauldron, 11 AM"

There is no date on the note, but the ticket's arrival time is a 10:30 AM (touchdown, with disembarkation taking another 10-20 minutes maximum) and so this is 'doable' but somewhat tight right after the flight. Note, most players will be without weapons of any kind here.

If the players performed a relatively simple search of the zone around the Transit Hub beforehand (no real roll needed, just a little effort), they come up with a bar called **The Witch's Cauldron** that is just outside of the Hub (about 4 or 5 minutes by sideway) in a somewhat less-than-reputable part of the Capital (though still Downtown).

A net search for the name "Mattias" is less helpful, because there is even less context. There are literally hundreds of people by that name in the city of this size (at least it isn't Smith), and there are no real records that will connect the Cauldron with the name (ownership, employees et al).

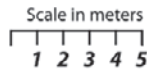
Part Two: London Calling



Witches' Cauldron

Key:

- 1 Public Entrance
- 2 Windows
- 3 Table/Chairs (typ)
- 4 Stage
- 5 Stairs (up)
- 6 Bar
- 7 Barstool (typ)
- 8 Railing
- 9 Booths
- 10 Entertainment Kiosk
- 11 Maintenance Area
- 12 Men's Personals
- 13 Women's Personals
- 14 Back Exit (Alleyway)
- 15 Kitchen Prep Area
- 16 Cook Units
- 17 Washing Area
- 18 Pantry Area



Visiting the Cauldron:

If the players decide to head to the Witch's Cauldron, they will only require a little time for the transit. Referees should make certain that they take a little time to explain how crowded that the streets and slideways are, even given the density of the Kansas City Megaopolis to which they are accustomed.

Description: *The buildings overhead tower, sending massive shadows across the sprawling city below. Along one of the shadowed streets lies a small neighborhood of somewhat dubious character. One of the storefronts along the back edge of one of these alleys is marked "Witch's Cauldron", with a perpetually lit OPEN sign.*

The inside of the Cauldron is narrow and jammed full of tables. A bar stands along one side, with a robotic bartender, and a few of the tables are already filled with custom despite the early hour. There is a raised area on the opposite side with a stage and booths along the walls.

Most of the people in here look like working class types, with a few harried businessmen here and there. None of them appear to be very talkative, as they sit, drinking from frothy dark-

hued pints in celebration of the local customs (real glass in fact, one of the Bar's few selling points). No one seems to take much notice of them but the waitstaff.

Mattias is to come there to meet with Madame Xiang on the day of her arrival, but the Referee may decide to change that date if they wish in order to force the encounter. The only problem is that Mattias would probably have become aware of the arrest of Madame Xiang in the intervening day, but this can be rationalized if the Referee thinks the encounter is important enough.

Timeline:

10:54 AM: A man dressed in a dark purple (new power color!) business suit appears within the doorframe of the Cauldron, he is middle-aged in appearance (which could mean anything above his mid 30s or 40s in practice) and the suit itself is relatively upscale for the little bar. He is fairly attractive, but in the bland way that faces are in the era of easy facesculpting technology. [For those with *Medicine* skill: His chin probably received the most work but it is a fairly good job. Players can make a *Recon (Intelligence, -1)*, *Investigation (Intelligence or Education, 0)* or *Social Science/Psychology (Intelligence, +1)* skill check to determine that the man looks slightly flustered and scared. Not anxious, but scared.]

10:58 AM: A second man and a woman enter the bar, they are more simply dressed than the first man, but still reasonably well groomed and also wearing "power" suits a little more appropriate for the area.

[Referee Note: these are Red Herrings. Referees should call for dice rolls on anyone the PCs want to "read" and may want to add a few more people of this type they pull out of their imagination later on. The bar gets a steady flux of customers, from a broad range of classes.]

11:03 AM: The man in the dark purple suit grows visibly nervous [**Referee Note:** If the players failed their earlier check, they may make another try with the same chances to notice the genuine fear], repeatedly checking the embedded watch on the inside of his wrist.

11:58 AM: If no one has done anything, the man checks his watch a final time and then leaves the Cauldron. [Players may tail Mattias with a *Streetwise* or *Stealth (Intelligence or Education, 0)* or, with less skill and more verve, by a *Recon (Dexterity, -2)* check. If they do, Mattias returns to his office described as below.]

Confronting Mattias:

Confronting Mattias can take several forms, from deceit and manipulation to outright honesty. There are two stages to this effort, one is in getting information from him, primarily an admission to what he has been doing for the Takara and perhaps more about this strange group. The other is in forcing him to into action, which in this case basically means acquiring some of his files to in digital or hardcopy form to supplement the other evidence as to what has been happening.

In the atmosphere of the Cauldron, Mattias will actually prove to be easier to 'open up', but harder to force into any action. If the players wait until Mattias in on his home turf, the opposite is true. If the players demonstrate any effort to use the advantages of the "turf" (speaking loudly in the Cauldron to make a scene for example), apply a +1/-1 to the skill checks listed below.

How the players approach Mattias will determine the skill checks needed for the encounter. If they use manipulation, make *Deception (Intelligence, -2)* Check, perhaps modified by *Social Science (Psychology)* to determine the specific tactic they should use (treat this like a Task Chain, **Traveller Main Rulebook**, pg. 51). If the players use blunt accusation, the check is more one of raw willpower: make a *Persuade* or *Diplomacy (Social, -2)* Check, modified by *Social Science (Psychology)* or *Deception* to add just enough of a twist to get him to do what they want.

Dialogue: At some point Eugene babbles...

- *What he does for them:* "I'm... a specialist I guess. I specialize in getting paperwork together, legal forms and that sort of thing, for people moving about the planet on account of their jobs. Nothing serious."
- *If Pressed further on this count:* "These... people... they wanted me to move some of their employees around and their... families."
- *Further:* "Children. Never easy to take a child from one side of the planet to another, go to a different nation-state and that sort of thing. Of course, if it's *your* child or at least the paperwork says it is, well... that's another matter entirely now isn't it?" **[Referee Note:** Referees who are substituting children for some other victim will need to amend this accordingly.]

If the players are interested in how he got snared, which isn't entirely necessary but still interesting, he will give them the following type of answers:



Eugene Mattias, ManPro District Manager, Takara Thrall

Mattias is in something of a state. He has been black-mailed and extorted already by the Takara, and he has not been sleeping very well because of the things that he must do as a result. Mattias indulges in a wide variety of sexual perversions (as they are considered by the rest of society, he is quite defensive about this) at the *Jade Empress Club* (the Takara's local version of the Bamboo Serenity in Kansas City). The Takara, who run several brothels specializing in a wide range of activities of this sort, have been using that indulgence as both carrot and stick to get him to do what they want along with other officials, key business people and even otherwise "unimportant" (in terms of political or economic clout) day-workers and other blue-collar types. A wide range of "helpers" (like Takeo Batchai in Yamaguchi District) are necessary for a group that causes such revulsion in others, and the network of these individuals are still crucial in their own fashion to the Takara.

Mattias is more than a little scared of the organization, but his situation is already sealed with regard to them. They have also supplied him with various experiences for "free", thus assuaging his ego slightly and subtly playing out his guilt. In this complex situation, Mattias knows very little of who and what they are, other than the fact that they have him in their clutches and that they are not the sort to be trifled with, but he has nonetheless become a critical part of their smooth continued operation worldwide. Far moreso than he (or perhaps even the Takara) realizes.

In game terms, Mattias really needs no stats. He is an average sort of person sucked into something well beyond his sweaty little imagination.

Part Two: London Calling

- *How he got involved:* "I... became involved with a group of people at the *Jade Empress*. It was a... private club. At first it was great, sex and drugs – legal and illegal of both varieties. Eventually, I was offered to become a "preferred partner". By then, I was... I was already in over my head. I just didn't know it."
- *Preferred Partnership:* "It was... intense. I was in freefall at the time, personal issues and that sort of thing. The release it offered was... intoxicating. Then I met people like Xiang. People that wanted me to do things. I also discovered that there was a dark side to the whole thing." The irony of this is that given some of the unsavory details of what he was doing, this seems self-evident.
- *Further pressing:* "I heard things, you know? About what happened if a Preferred Partner of the Club didn't perform these little side tasks? Someone got arrested for their private stash for not obeying the request. Someone else had their lives ruined: family abandoned them, that sort of thing. A few had family members... co-opted into the operation if they even balked." He shudders. "One guy got killed for outright defiance; none of us said anything though because if he had done what he said and gone to the authorities it was the end of all of us. By that time, I realized I was inside way too deep. It was... I couldn't help myself. Just doing what they asked was so small a thing individually, paperwork here and there, and the rewards so..." he shudders in a different way here and players will probably ought to be disgusted.

Through this all, Mattias' starts to sweat profusely, his eyes glance too and fro. It hardly requires *Social Science (Psychology) or Investigation* to know that he feels guilty but he's still in the Takara's thrall no matter how bad he feels about what he is doing. The Referee may want to have the player characters make a check to determine that *in their informed opinion* Mattias is probably going to tell the Takara everything eventually. Maybe not right away, but he is, in his own words, "inside way too deep." Whether this is true or not means very little. Once the Takara find out he is their weak point, he's a dead man.

If the players want the files ("action") ...

- "They get me to come to them. Never the other way around. I meet them in places like this." He indicates the Cauldron. "Usually the... Madame Xiang and the adults she wants to process through the paperwork.

I give them the right paperwork, fill out the portions I need to, using information they send to me beforehand and a few other details that help grease the wheels, and then later on in the day the paperwork comes back to me by commercial courier service. [By "greasing the wheels" he means that there are certain flags that set off the border checks for different local nations and sub-national governments. Mattias knows what they are and how to avoid them in advance. Nothing illegal or even particularly illegitimate about that, more a matter of bureaucratic competence. The courier service is actually a decent lead, the company **Automaton Deliveries**, uses Drone and Robots to make their deliveries. It is one of the Takara's front companies.]

- *The Material he has on him:* "I... doubt it will help you very much." [He hands them over, the material is about three-quarters finished, it lists a company name in the ROP where the "prospective client" is headed along with their family. The data that has been provided includes full details of the children, but very little for the adults. The transit is for tomorrow, the same date that the Takara were headed back to the ROP]. "They gave me a list of company names and addresses some time ago. I just use that."
- "My files? You want.... No... no I couldn't."

As the files in his office suggest, this is not the entire truth. If Referees want, they can sprinkle some of these details in, gleaned from the following.

The Office:

Mattias heads a local ManPro Agency, a franchised Manpower Professional corporation. While most ManPro Offices try to find employment opportunities for their clients, Mattias himself (as the franchise owner of Parkhurst ManPro) specializes in moving these individuals around once they have already found positions.

Description:

The Parkhurst Hypertower, is a mid-sized arcology located 20 minutes away from the Cauldron by Slideway. The Slideways along this stretch are decent, well-maintained and heavily trafficked. [Referee Note: Referees can add color here as desired. Make it grandiose.]

The Hypertower is, as the name would suggest, a tall spire-like structure (not too dissimilar to others in the Downtown London Area) roughly

1,000m tall (which is dissimilar to them as the Downtown areas are less built up by conscious choice). The structure is broken into discrete sections, known as "Terra" and numbered from the bottom to the top. In the upper part of the lower half is a rather significant "bubble" which serves as a Bourlag (hi-rise hydroponics garden), providing the building with a pleasant green appearance along with the 'steel' (actually composite alloy materials that are ten times stronger than building materials found in the 21st century but still often referred to as 'steel') and 'glass' (actually a transparent artificial plastic affectionately referred to as 'glaz' but coming in a wide variety of brand-names).

The Parkhurst ManPro office is located on Terra 4, above the "bubble" at the top of the lower half of the structure. The trip into the Parkhurst Hypertower takes the players across broad plazas as they enter the monumental structure, then up express elevators that run along the outside of the building (affording a marvelous view of the city). Then the players go back into a central plaza where they take a circular escalator to the floor that they need (Terra 4, Grid 2, Section 41, Lot 7B).

Description:

The ManPro office is a relatively standard looking "storefront" found in the commercial level of the Terra (it looks very similar to a 21st century Mall retail shop). Inside the office is a narrow area with three small clusters of desks at regular intervals in the front, where the glass separates them from the arcade. There are two other doors, one marked "office" the other unmarked.

Office: *The Office is well-appointed and very modern looking, with a visiwindow (which shows a pastoral setting outside, the image usually comes from a remote vidpickup located somewhere else which has a nice view) behind the broad desk. The desk itself has an uncluttered surface, and doubles as a computer interface station.*

Unmarked door: *There is a short hallway with four doors, two on either side: None of them are marked. At the end of the hall is a visiwindow that shows a scene taken from outside of the Parkhurst building itself, but from one of the much higher floors. [The doors lead to a conference room, a pair of restrooms, and a storage room, none of which are very exciting, except perhaps the storeroom, where the hardcopy files are located.]*

What About The *Jade Empress* and Automaton Deliveries?

The Jade Empress Club and the Automaton Deliveries courier service are probably a great place to start if the players are interested in going after the London Takara. This is indeed an excellent springboard for that investigation. But the in Part Two of *Beyond the Open Door*, the focus is slowly shifting away from the Takara, as evil as they are, and onto a larger and more horrifying problem which is connected to the local OSS.

Individual Referees running these adventures as a part of an ongoing multi-session Campaign may decide that taking the time and effort to track this stuff down will be fruitful. Either at the same time perhaps as the Orphanages, which lay along the main track of the adventure, or on their own track. Here however, such a course of action is a sidetrack from the main thrust, because as exhilarating as cultist-hunting is, there is a bigger picture in the background.

Of course, Referees are free to make their own adventures based on this information, and future freebies from Terrasol games may even steer them in that direction. In fact, this might be a good time for individual Referees to assess whether they think their players will actually be interested in chasing after the potentially world-spanning kind of direction the main path of the Adventure takes. It is not inconceivable to only use portions of Act One and Two in your own games and go cult hunting. Good Luck!



Part Two: London Calling

Mattias' Files:

Mattias' files show that he has been moving people around for over three years now, not just the children, but adults on-planet and to the various other worlds and colonies of the Terra/Sol System. All told, there are literally hundreds of documents, revealing that at least several hundred people have been shuffled through Mattias' bureaucratic legerdemain.

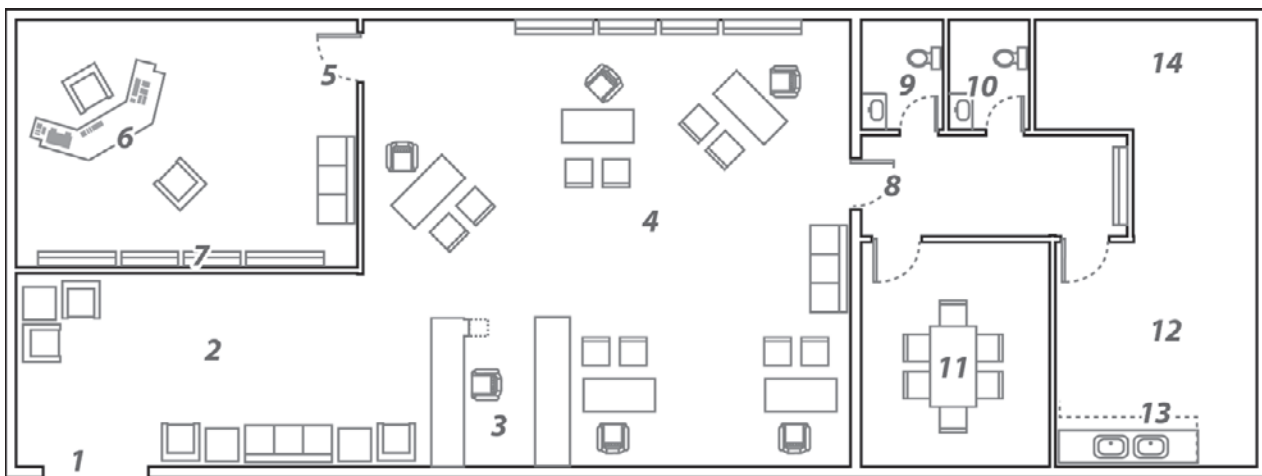
An *Admin (Education, 0, 1-6 minutes)* check, determines that the Takara number at least in the low hundreds, if not thousands and are spread out in pockets of the ROP, Columbia, the Russian Republic and several other major population areas – except notably the Aztec Empire). Logic would dictate that Mattias is most likely not the only one who performs these services for the group.

For Referees: The information, while provocative as well as informative as to the nature of the problem, is not going to help considerably taking this group down. Once they “move” to the locations with Mattias' help, the Takara rarely stick around. The addresses and other employer data they provide for the paperwork are as phony as the names they use. Still, it helps the players get a better picture of the cult as a worldwide and even system-wide phenomenon, even if it does not provide them with a complete or highly detailed picture.

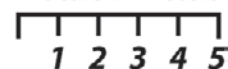
The Takara Response:

If the players are being followed by the Takara, they will not appreciate anything that they do with Mattias. If the Takara later discover his involvement, Mattias will also be eliminated. His only real hope is to start running now, and run far and fast. This does have an impact on the players however: If they meet with Mattias and get everything at one time, nothing much happens from the players perspective (Mattias is still someone's lunch – literally), the damage is done already and the Takara are still likely to sit back and wait. If they meet with Mattias in stages, or come back to get something, the Takara will have already moved in very quickly. If given any opportunity, they have killed Mattias in his office and made certain that nothing remains of the files he has on-site. Just how bloody this is depends on the time and the circumstances. They don't want to execute the man and all of his subordinates in broad daylight, but they will if they need to.

If the Players have Mattias' files, the Takara *could* consider going after them. Frankly the only reason not to is that this is something of a sidetrack (see Sidebar about **Automaton Deliveries**). Of course, Referees may decide to run a Takara strike on the PCs just to liven up longer sessions or multi-session games. This strike will be much stronger than the one used by the Yamaguchi Nest to eliminate the budding thorn in the cult's side. If nothing else, the London Takara are fast learners.



Scale in meters



ManPro Office, Parkhurst

Key:

- | | |
|--------------------|---------------------|
| 1 Public Entrance | 8 Unmarked Door |
| 2 Waiting Area | 9 Men's Personal |
| 3 Reception | 10 Women's Personal |
| 4 Agent Bullpen | 11 Conference Room |
| 5 Door to Office | 12 Storeroom Area |
| 6 Mattias' Desk | 13 Kitchenette |
| 7 Visiwindow (typ) | 14 File Storage |

LEGWORk AT THE ORPHANAGES

Locating the two orphanages used by the Takara to adopt children will not prove difficult. The paperwork that was found with the children held by the Takara prominently declares all that information. The two orphanages in question are two of the largest in London, both located on the outskirts of the city. The first, Alexandria Orphanage, is the larger of the two and well-known throughout London as a respected orphanage. The second, Northwoods Orphanage (ironically boarding South London), is slightly smaller and not as prominent or well-known.

Research using the Net:

Players can make a *Computers (Intelligence, +3, 10-60 minutes)* skill check to gather basic public information about the two orphanages. Such information reveals the public internet sites, addresses, operating hours, contact information and other such common details of the orphanages.

No specific information regarding the staff, the children in the orphanages or past adoptions can be found in such a search. Players can also find testimonials from families that have adopted children from these orphanages, all of which praise the orphanages and their staff.

Making the Trip in Person:

If the players wish to travel to the orphanages and speak with the staff, they find doing so difficult. The orphanages do not allow unscheduled tours of the facilities and players must make an appointment to speak with adoption counselors, the directors or other staff members. Players may also make an appointment to schedule a tour under the guise of adopting a child, but such one of the only ways for players to receive a tour.

Speaking to the staff without an appointment calls for a *Diplomacy (Social Standing, -2)*, *Deception (Social Standing, -1)* or *Persuade (Social Standing, -2)* skill check to get even the most basic information out of the staff. In casual conversation the staff will only reveal common information such as with whom to make an appointment, procedures for adoption or making an appointment, etc. Players will find that the staff is curt and impolite to questions or queries; no member of the staff will discuss specific adoptions.

Players staking out the orphanages (or those who enter them openly) can make a *Recon (Intelligence, -2, 1-6 minutes)* skill check to take notice of the security around the facilities. Security at both locations is especially tight with a significant amount of cameras and anti-infiltration equipment in evidence (and who knows what microminiaturized video surveillance may exist). Both orphanages also employ a private security company called **Paragon Security** that maintains a presence at all times

- ▷ **Referee Note:** these security forces are provided by the OSS, the company as a whole is not entirely OSS, but there is a division within it that the OSS is able to use for these sort of operations. Players who perform an analysis of the company using existing records will need to make a check of the following in order as a Task-Chain (with the previous check modifying the one immediately following it) with a total time requirement of 1-6 hours: *Computer (Intelligence or Education, -1)*; *Bureaucracy (Education, -2)*. Success in the final check will determine that Paragon operates as a front for someone, although not precisely who without some more information. Most of their operations however which look "off" seem to revolve around government contracts, which should indicate at least a pull in that direction.

If the players desire to speak with a member of the staff, such as an adoption counselor or the director, they must make an appointment, which will require them to state why they are requesting an appointment. Players must make an *Admin (Social Standing, +0)*, *Diplomacy (Social Standing, -2)*, *Deception (Social Standing, -1)* or *Persuade (Social Standing, -2)* skill check to get an appointment otherwise their requests will take an excessive amount of time or be downright rejected. When and if the players manage to meet with a member of the staff, requests for information will result in the players speaking with the director of either facility. Both directors are surly individuals that are immediately suspicious of the players and their questioning. Players will be unable to gain any information from speaking with the staff, aside from basic information they may have already gained. As with other members of the staff, the directors are curt and rude, dismissing the players as soon as it becomes evident that they are digging into the operations of the orphanages at all.

Have We No Orphanages? A Modest Proposal

For those Referees who wish to replace the children with other innocent victims, this (and Act Two) is where the bulk of the work must be done. The Mattias material, specifically the mention of children in his dialogue and the material discovered in his files, have to be amended slightly, but this is the section that has to be gutted and replaced.

Luckily, doing so is moderately easy. Everything from the description of the orphanages themselves to the runaround from the staff and the tightened security is going to be the same whether you are dealing with an orphanage or a hospital facility designed to help Mutant War Vets get off the wire (i.e. drop their Volt Junkie addictions). Either way, the facilities in question is supposedly reputable, take in innocents and then mercilessly send them into the clutches of foul cultists like the Takara, or some mad science laboratory which has made a devil's bargain with the OSS.

Alternatively, the Players could have discovered in Part One that Xiang was trying to get children, but that she had also received (to use the possibility mentioned above) Volt Junkies in comatose states for her larder. This way there is both, an Orphanage (where the OSS recruit young talent) and a Rest Home for Distressed Veterans (which are funneled into experimentation programs). You might even salt the data that is yet to be discovered to find that the OSS is one of the major contributors to the problem of Mutant War Vets getting hooked on the Wire. This way there are two different targets, each with slightly different data to uncover.

Surprise! You've been Tagged!

While government contacts and the like can be a great thing for getting information, they are also the same waters in which the malefactors here (the OSS) swim. That means going through official contacts and resources will light the characters up when they conduct these searches.

Something for Referees to keep in mind when they consider the involvement of this shadowy organization. It would probably be a bit shady to suggest that PCs use their official resources in this endeavor, but if the players ask, certainly have their contacts be *eager* to supply *lots* of assistance. If the Players are carefully worded in their approach, such as specifically telling their contacts inside government or law enforcement to keep this very secretive, the contacts will report that the mere hint of interest in these orphanages brings an inordinate amount of attention. That gives the Players another piece of the puzzle.

General Description:

Alexandria Orphanage: Located on a sprawling estate near one of the "nature pockets"; this is a very well-respected, well maintained facility. It is located on the outskirts of the London megopolis, so only one side bears the skyline of her graceful towers and domes. On the other side is open country, the vast and expensive real estate of the London elite and their faux country homes.

Alexandria's main structure is an imposing building, constructed from large cube-forms which have been laid out in a diamond shaped pattern. There is a central plaza and one large cube in the center, with four smaller cubes at the points of the diamond. Children are kept in the cubes clustered around the points, while the main cube serves as an administrative building. In between the cubes is open space that is used by the children under supervision.

[Referee's may want to use this instead if the PCs are planning a night break-in: They can be found here by day, laughing and playing in a natural environment; at night however the landscape takes on a much more foreboding appearance as Athena casts long shadows among the deserted playgrounds.]

The Northwoods Orphanage is tucked away in one of the outer boroughs of the London Megopolis. To one side lays the skyline of the city, to the other the ocean. But they are themselves located in a pinch point around two industrial facilities, both of which have access to the Thames for loading onto the barges and seaskimmers.

The Northwoods compound consists of one structure, and one walled-in playground area. It is not so much rundown as deliberately spartan and the block-style building holds several hundred children (as much if not more than the sprawling Alexandria Orphanage). Northwoods fencing system is actually concentric, the fence for the playground is bound in by another outer fence, much higher and strewn with Ivy

The outer walls are covered with a fast-growing form of ivy which was genetically engineered some years ago for the original structure (a school) and which baffles all efforts to remove. The Ivy crawls up and over the walls and spills into the neighboring industrial areas, which has been scorched and cut by their robots for years. **[Referee Note:** As one might imagine, the neighbors don't like this much. An Opportunity?]

Comparing the two Locations:

Players visiting both orphanages in any capacity will quickly realize how similar the operations of both facilities are. Indeed, both organizations employ the same security company (Paragon Security), have similar security set-ups (including a great deal of video surveillance for an operation of this type), respond in almost identical ways to questioning and use very similar methods of organization and administration.

[Referee Note: Speaking with orphanages outside of the two in question (as a means of comparison) will reveal very different ways of doing business and it will become evident to the players that these two orphanages are clearly linked in some way.]

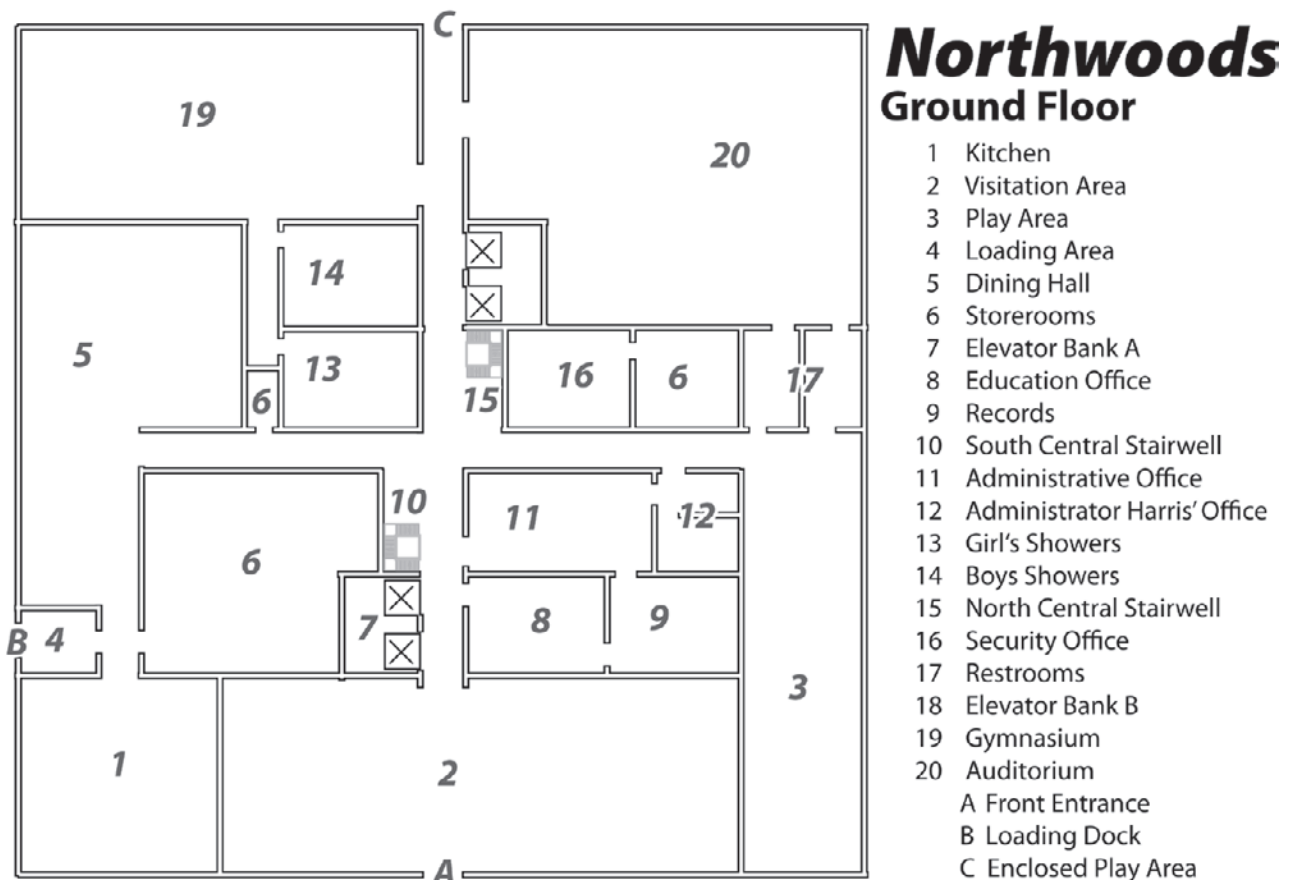
Players that deceive their way into the orphanages can do so relatively easily, posing as prospective parents. Doing so (requiring *Deception* skill checks, as above) will result in the players being granted a tour of the facilities; such a tour will give the players an opportunity to get an idea of the building layouts and allow players to see firsthand how the children are being cared for. To

all outward appearances, the orphanages function as one would expect and both facilities are well maintained and the children well cared for. Players can make a *Recon (Intelligence, -1)* skill check while on a tour to notice the tight security even within the facilities themselves. Apart from gaining information about the building layouts and security, players will be unable to notice anything out of the ordinary when on a tour.

It should quickly become clear to players investigating the orphanages that gaining any information about the two facilities proves quite difficult; far more difficult than one would expect from an orphanage. To summarize:

- ▷ The staff at both facilities are resistant to questioning, Highly resistant.
- ▷ The buildings are very well secured and there are uncanny similarities as to how both organizations operate.
- ▷ These facts create more questions than answers and it appears as though the players will need to dig deeper to find the answers they're looking for.

Well, that is the plan until the Men in Black show up.



ORION SECURITY SERVICE (INSIDE INFO)

If one were to ask a citizen of the Orion Confederation what the Orion Security Service's role was, most would flounder at the question. Nearly every Orion citizen is aware of the presence of the OSS, but very few are certain of the organization's responsibilities. As such, the OSS enjoys the anonymity associated with other clandestine agencies despite being known throughout the galaxy.

Publicly, the chief task of the OSS is to 'protect the Orion Confederation and its citizens from external influences'. This description is intentionally broad-reaching in its scope, but overall the agency is responsible for monitoring and responding to foreign threats to the Confederation. In the past, the OSS has engaged in espionage and counter-espionage as well as intelligence gathering, but has recently moved into a far wider number of hidden operations and agendas. Few among the Orion government are aware of the vast reach the organization has, nor the lengths in which the OSS will go to see their goals realized.

Little is known about the OSS leadership or even if the agency has a centralized organizational structure. What *is* known is that the OSS is separated into a number of smaller branches, each operating out of one of dozens of divisions. In theory, these divisions are thought to maintain communication with one another, but the reality is far less organized. Each division is almost completely autonomous from the others, operating with its own set of goals and rules. This is intentional, giving the OSS as a whole complete deniability for the actions of any of its individual divisions. In the past, when an OSS division was found responsible for some gross wrongdoing (a rare occurrence), blame was placed squarely on the heads of that division with the rest of the organization free of any criminal activity. In addition, no division is aware of the activities of the others, ensuring that state secrets are limited to only those responsible for their keeping. This has had the effect of occasionally pitting two divisions of the OSS against one another, unwittingly competing against one another. The results of these encounters are highly classified and usually result in significant collateral damage.

The discovery of Terra/Sol resulted in the creation of a new sub-division of the OSS Twilight Sector Division: the Terra/Sol Division, which has devoted a great deal of resources to the exploration of Terra/Sol. OSS operations on the planet are among the most well-funded and heavily manned operations in the Confederation. The Terra/Sol Division maintains ties to the Twilight Sector Division, though the latter branch gives their sub-division a great deal of latitude in their operations. There is no public record of the Terra/Sol Division's leadership or organizational structure; though many believe it follows similar lines of the OSS as a whole.

Unbeknownst to most, the primary task undertaken by the Terra/Sol Division involves discovering the true nature of the planet on which they operate. Few among the Twilight Sector Division accept the Dukett Theory that Terra/Sol is a naturally occurring world and they seek to do everything in their power to discover how this unusual world came to be. Within the Terra/Sol Division is a growing belief that non-human forces are responsible for the world's origin and that these forces are actively working against humankind. While this theory has yet to grow beyond the Terra/Sol Division, a rising paranoia can be found among agents assigned to duty on Terra/Sol.

A chief concern among the Terra/Sol Division is the event known as the *Transformation*: the spontaneous mutation of a significant percentage of the population of Terra/Sol beginning in 2856. This has led to an increased investigation of mutants born on Terra/Sol following this event. The OSS has engaged in a campaign of tracking such mutants and studying them, tracing mutation trends and other such data that they hope will lead them to determine what, if any, these trends might indicate. These studies, by less than scrupulous individuals, often result in the abduction and occasional dissection of mutants. Conspiracy theorists among mutant communities on Terra/Sol speak of black vehicles coming to take them away, never to be seen again. Such stories are not far from the truth.

As with most OSS divisions, the agents among the Terra/Sol Division are devoted to the cause and fanatically loyal to their patron organization. All but the most sedentary of operatives have been trained to resist interrogation and the OSS ensures that most vital information is compartmentalized and insulated from discovery. The OSS has little compunction about using any means at its disposal to prevent its secrets from getting out and will use assassination, blackmail and other tools without hesitation. The paranoia prevalent within the Terra/Sol Division leads most of its operatives to believe they are waging a shadow war with an unseen, alien foe; this belief ensures that members of this division are usually far more fanatical about their service than most. Enemies of the Terra/Sol Division are nearly always thought to be agents of a malign alien force and treated as such.

The Orion Security Service remains a mysterious organization about which little is known. If the public were to learn about the myriad of otherwise criminal activity the organization was engaged in, it would cause a great deal of turmoil for the agency. The Terra/Sol Division, specifically, will stop at nothing to discover the secrets of Terra/Sol and believe they are the only thing standing in the way of an alien invasion. This misguided belief gives them carte blanche to perform a variety of abhorrent tasks under the guise of patriotism.

Only time will tell if their beliefs hold any truth.

MEN IN BLACK

Investigating the orphanages will take some time on the part of the players as they search for information, interact with the staff and stake out the organizations. As the players dig into the orphanages, they inevitably gain the attention of the Orion Security Service. After the players initial investigations of the orphanages, the OSS sends two agents to begin following the players. Even players posing as prospective parents are investigated, such is the paranoia of the OSS.

Immediately after the OSS begins to tail the players, the organization digs into their backgrounds. Within the hour, they have all of the relevant facts garnered from a legion of Net Pilots (some freelance, some under the payroll). With these resources at their disposal, the OSS is able to instantly learn everything there is to know about the players, even information normally difficult to find. It quickly becomes clear to the OSS that the players intend to investigate the orphanages further in response to the events that took place in Kansas City. Keep in mind that the OSS is an Intelligence agency after all: this isn't some hobby for them.

Once the OSS begins following the players, the players can make *Recon (Intelligence, -3)* skill checks to notice the tail. Two men, dressed in black suits and driving a black grav car have been assigned to follow the players at all times and take turns following players that split up. Players attempting to slip the two agents can make a *Stealth (Intelligence, -3)* skill check; OSS agents that lose the players will return to stake out the players' hotel. The OSS agents will break off their tail if the players approach them; cornering the OSS agents will force an encounter.

After the players have begun to investigate the orphanages and the OSS has gathered information on the players, the OSS agents approach the players; likewise, if the players confront the OSS agents following them, they force an encounter. When the OSS agents finally do approach the players, they do so when the players are alone and in private; ideal locations include the players' hotel or on an empty city street. The two OSS agents approach the players, and introduce themselves as **Agent Lynch** and **Agent Needham**.

The two men are relatively indistinguishable and both are very average looking yet clearly athletic. They are wearing black suits of slightly above-average cut. Neither man looks overly friendly, despite the fact they are smiling.

If the players ask for identification, they will both smile:

- "We don't need Identification citizen: you do. Nothing to worry about. This isn't an arrest or an interrogation, it's a message: A Friendly one."

A Little Talk

The men tell the players that they work for the Orion Security Service and that the players' investigation into the two orphanages is one that has already been undertaken by the OSS. The agents continue, telling the players that the OSS is aware of the events in Kansas City and that they have access to the same information the players do. They make it absolutely clear that the players' services are not needed. The agents thank the players for their hard work but ask that they return to Kansas City immediately: "You know, for State Security" one quips.

The OSS agents are direct in their communication with the players. They make it explicitly clear that the players have stumbled upon something far beyond their abilities and that they should suspend their investigation immediately. While they do not threaten the players directly, the two agents make it quite clear that the OSS is not to be trifled with and that the players should strongly consider abandoning their search for information. The OSS agents will answer the players' questions with misdirection and veiled threats. After the initial response by the players, the agents leave, ignoring any further reaction on the part of the players.

In the Unfortunate case...

If the players attempt to harm the OSS agents, the two respond with deadly force. The two agents flee if out-matched or injured. Should the players corner or kill the OSS agents, they find little on them that reveals their true identities or verifies any information the agents provided. If the OSS agents are killed, the strike team sent against the players in the next scene uses every means at their disposal to kill the players, ruthlessly cutting them down rather than showing any leniency.

Agent Lynch/Needham

STR: 9(+1) **DEX:** 7 **END:** 9(+1) **INT:** 8 **EDU:** 9(+1) **SOC:** 7

Skills: Admin (or Advocate) 2, Deception 3, Drive 2, Gun Combat (Pistol 3), Melee (Unarmed 2), Recon 2, Sensors 1, Stealth 2, Streetwise 1, plus Mission skill: 2

Equipment: Gauss Autopistol (3d6, Auto 4, -1 Recoil) Armored clothing (AV: 5), Their sun visors incorporate IR and Light Intensification.

Part Two: London Calling



PART II, ACT TWO: CLANDESTINE AFFAIRS

Having encountered the OSS, the players realize that they've uncovered something important. Indeed, some player characters may be having second thoughts about the entire business by now. In this scene, they are approached by the mysterious Cybil Mar who helps the characters continue their investigations.

Using these encounters

The Objective for this portion of the adventure is to end with the players having proven themselves to Cybil Mar and gotten some, but hardly all, of the data they need. It is Cybil's introduction and her first (and only) test of the Players.

This portion of the adventure is very linear. The only part that the players might skip is the OSS Strike team or optional Cyberswarm attack, although the latter could easily be folded into their break-in at the Orphanage as the Head of Security decides that a strike against the interlopers is worth the death of some kids who likely aren't going to make it anyway.

The players investigations into the two orphanages where children were adopted are however stalled. The players were unable to discover much in the way of evidence as to why these adoptions took place and have come to suspect the orphanages of wrongdoings. Their suspicions have been confirmed when two men, claiming to be members of the Orion Security Service, warned the players not to investigate the orphanages further.

Depending on their response to the veiled threats of the OSS agents, the players may be inclined to give up their investigations and go home; the players will be more inclined than ever to continue their search for information regarding the operations of the orphanages. If this is the case, the players will need to dig deeper into the orphanages as well as research the OSS itself. While such investigations may prove challenging, the players receive help and motivation from a mysterious source.

The Purpose of this Scene is two-fold: The re-task the Player's attention slowly from the Orphanages to a larger conspiracy and the introduce the players to Cybil Mar. An action scene is included to keep the players on their toes.

MEET CYBIL MAR

Following the encounter with the OSS agents, the players will probably want to decide their next course of action.

If the Players have chosen to heed the agents' warning and depart, they should proceed making arrangements to leave London. But this will take a little time, even if only to wait for the next scheduled flight in the right direction. If the players opt to stay and continue their investigations despite being warned off, they must now dig past the layers of security into the depths of the orphanages and attempt to discover more information in the mysterious organizations.

At this point, it would be romantic to say that fate intervenes, and it would also be wrong. Cybil Mar has been aware of the players for some time, and has been eager for them to get to this point so that she may contact them. She understands the importance of timing, but that the same time she understands that there is something big going on inside of the OSS. Her cover is not a top agent, but a rising star, and as such she has become privy to information from the higher-ups that there is a big operation that will affect the entire population. She at present isn't entirely sure of what that operation entails, or even where it will be kicked off from, but one of the reasons she latched onto the London Office was to hear about such world-shaking operations she might not otherwise hear about in the Budapest Branch (not that she was ever there).

Café Mar

As the players are planning their next move, they are approached by a woman who will prove to be an invaluable asset in their investigations. Cybil Mar currently works from within the OSS to expose the organization's dark secrets and believes the players can help her. She knows that the Players have been warned off, and what might happen as a result. She also knows that this is the time for her personal involvement and the role that she needs to play at this point (mysterious benefactor). She will approach the players and offer to help them in their investigations if they assist her in bringing this information to light.

Cybil approaches the players discreetly at first, but chooses a public location for the meeting so as to ensure her own safety. When the players are eating a meal or having a drink, Cybil seats herself with the players, choosing one of the male players to get close to. Cybil Mar is (at present) described as thus:

Description

A beautiful young woman stands next to [the players character she selects]. She has a slightly pale complexion and light brown hair. She is dressed very elegantly, and there is something about her eyes that makes you sit up and take notice. "Mind if I join you?" she asks, with just a little purr in her voice.

Sliding into the seat, she removes a small device from her purse with a wink. At first, it looks like a standard compact, the sort women have been using now for over a thousand years.

[Referee Note: Players who have diplomatic, criminal, intelligence or law enforcement backgrounds will recognize it by function if not type: a "Husher" that defeats remote surveillance efforts.]

She activates the device. "There," she says her voice becoming a bit less vampish but still sultry. "This will shield the us from anyone who's eavesdropping."

As a reminder for the Referee: You can use the Audio File "Cybil Mar in Restaurant" here just after she activates the "husher". It's her way of breaking the ice.

She tells the players that she knows who they are and what they're doing in London and offers to help them. While she will not reveal to the players that she is a (nominal) member of the OSS. She tells them that the OSS is responsible for terrible things and is secretly using the two orphanages as a way of recruiting children as well as shifting them around to their assets and allies for any number of unsavory purposes (such as the Takara). She explains that the children are adopted out to false families, which are covers for the OSS. They are then shipped off to a number of OSS facilities for any number of detestable programs the OSS is engaged in on Terra/Sol. She is not sure what the connection between the OSS and the Takara are, but any adoptions going

Roleplaying as Cybil:

Cybil is a strong, confident woman with a seemingly endless amount of information on a vast array of subjects. She's intelligent and delights in learning more about people through casual wordplay. She is also very cautious, paranoid really (although the old saw "...you're not paranoid if they are really out to get you" applies in her case.



through the two orphanages the players are investigating are overseen by the OSS, who must have surely known who the Takara were.

Give the players a chance to respond after the audio file (or your own recitation of the information). The questions they ask will probably concentrate on the following:

While she is willing to answer some questions the players might have, Cybil will remain with the group for only a short time. She is clearly unwilling to answer some questions, including any questions involving her or her past; to such questions she merely states that she has a grudge against the OSS. She will not reveal (at present) that she is “undercover” inside of the OSS at the very time.

- ▷ She is certain that this information exists somewhere, most likely within the orphanages computer systems, But these are inaccessible from outside the facilities, so someone has to go in.
- ▷ She knows of their work already, and has some assistance that will help, including complete maps of the locations and the security protocols from Paragon.
- ▷ She suggests that there is a lot of “chatter” right now, something big is about to happen and even people on the inside don’t know all the details. She’s going to work “her end” to see what she can find.

Players who specifically ask may make can attempt an *Investigate (Intelligence, -3)* or *Recon (Intelligence, -3)* skill check to detect any falsehood in Cybil’s story; success indicates that she is clearly telling the truth, but also that she is hiding a great deal of information from the players.

Then use the Audio File “*Cybil Mar in Restaurant 2*” just before she leaves. She warns them that the OSS is not to be underestimated and that the organization is an evil, corrupt entity that will stop at nothing to keep their secrets buried.

After the Second Audio File, Cybil will tell the team she has to de-activate her Husher soon or it will overheat. Before she leaves, however she hands one of them what looks like a standard communication device,

- “It looks like a normal commercial model but it’s not,” [*Indeed, The player she hands it to notice it is actually much heavier.*] “Nice little toy, it’s shielded from everything I’ve been able to find but only works with another set on the same frequency.” [*She holds up another that is then slipped into her purse*] “I’ll be in touch again in the near future. Remember what I said, be careful.”

She turns off the Husher, then turns and leaves without a further word.

Players attempting to follow Cybil will find that she disappears into a crowd shortly after hitting

Part Two: London Calling

the streets and is quite skilled at avoiding being followed. If the players later attempt to search for any information regarding a woman named Cybil Mar, they will be unable to find any trace of such a woman. The communication device she gave them is a specialized model, it is untraceable and it has been loaded with some very advanced (TL 15 or maybe TL 16) cryptography and sub-etheric broadcasting modes. This thing should work on the bottom of the ocean and get a clear reception.

BUSTING INTO THE ORPHANAGES

In order to get any real evidence linking the orphanages to the OSS and the Takara the players must infiltrate the orphanages themselves. The players will need to gain access to the computer systems or offices of one (or both) orphanages in order to get the information they need. Use the Northwoods Map on Page XX for either facility the Players choose to hit.

Players hoping to infiltrate the orphanages discreetly will find it easier to do at night when the majority of the staff is not on site. Players hoping to sneak into the orphanages must make a *Stealth (Dexterity, -3)* skill check to avoid detection by the guards on duty. Players must also have detected the presence of cameras covering the main entrances and the grounds or risk being captured on video. Entering the buildings of the orphanages requires a *Deception (Dexterity, -3, 10-60 seconds)* skill check to pick the locks.

Each orphanage is guarded by a security staff of three guards every night. One guard is present within the security office while two are constantly on patrol. The guards are armed with batons and stunners. At the first sign of trouble, guards call for backup; the guard in the office immediately calls an OSS strike team to respond to any problems with a concealed panic button. Players may take note that police do not respond to any disturbances and the OSS keeps all matters to themselves. Guards that are injured or out-matched flee, calling in details of any attackers to the security office.

Players have the best chances of locating important information in the director's office or by using any computer in the facility to attempt to access protected information. Players infiltrating the director's office of either orphanage may make an *Investigate (Intelligence, -2)* or *Recon (Intelligence, -2)* skill check to discover clues. Players accessing information using the orphanages' computer system must make a

Computers (Intelligence, -4) skill check; bonuses from Intrusion software can be used to hack the security system.

The following clues can be gained by infiltrating the orphanages. Referees are free to reveal these to the players in any order as well as add their own or divide the clues among the two orphanages, as they see fit:

- ▷ The computer systems of the orphanages are quite advanced and have Rating 2 security software; far more advanced than is needed for an orphanage.
- ▷ Financial information reveals that the orphanages receive a large amount of donations from private individuals. Tracking these individuals shows that nearly all of them possess various ambiguous government jobs, which could be covers for the OSS.
- ▷ The orphanages receive a great deal of information from government grants.
[Referee Note: Further research, defaulting to an unmodified roll of any Science skill or to Computer skill, reveals that these numbers are far higher than other orphanages on Terra/Sol.]
- ▷ A large majority of families that adopt children from the orphanages move immediately following the adoption. No information is given as to where they move.
[Referee note: Independent contractors handle this, folks like Mattias who does this same work for the Takara. This keeps the OSS clean of the transactions.]
- ▷ Many families that adopt children from the orphanages list their employer as government agencies. The majority of these list the same forms of ambiguous positions within these government agencies as the employees of the orphanages.
- ▷ Many staff members lack any real background information such as previous employment, education, etc. The data fields used in the standardized personnel programs are blank
[Referee Note: These forms are used for Taxes and thus hard to avoid even for a clandestine operation like this one, that fact also makes them an excellent resource for hackers looking for this kind of data.]
- ▷ Staff members from the orphanages who do have some of these data fields filled out appear to have previous employment for a variety of government agencies.
- ▷ Many staff members list their home addresses as the same address downtown with different apartment numbers: 87559 Brown, Cameron

Center, Residential Hall XXX (the X's are the rooms they occupy). [Note: Cameron Center is an Industrial neighborhood in the inner-city/downtown area and while residences there are not exactly unknown, it is a bit strange to have so many in such a unique location].

- ▷ The adoption records of the children found in Kansas City show the children were adopted to the same woman, Madame Xiang, many around the same time. There is a special notation in the adoption records stating that the adoptions were pre-approved by a man named Thomas Crowley from the Federal Children's Services department. Crowley is listed as a donor whose contact information indicates he can be reached at the same downtown address as many of the staff has listed as their residence.

The players should feel a sense of urgency as they investigate the orphanages, even if they have eliminated the possibility of being caught by the security guards. When they have completed their investigations, they will need to leave the orphanage without being spotted. If the players infiltrate one of the orphanages, both orphanages will vastly increase security making it far more difficult for the players to infiltrate the other orphanage in the future.

STRIKE TEAM

Having disregarded the warning given to them by the OSS, the players have garnered the attention of an OSS strike team called in to stop their investigation once and for all. The strike team is sent to kill the party or, at the very least, prevent them from continuing their investigations and silence them from revealing any evidence they might have.

Immediately following the players' investigations into the orphanages, they are set upon by the strike team. The team can hit the players in a number of locations:

- ▷ Setting up an ambush for the players at their hotel is the most direct method the strike team will use; when the players return to their hotel the strike team attacks, surprising the players.
- ▷ If the players do not return to a central location that has been staked out, the strike team will lose patience and attempt a hit on the road; waiting until the players are in a dark and isolated location, the vehicles of the team cut off the players and the strike team attacks on the street.

Paragon Security Consultants



While Paragon is a front company for the OSS, it is actually useful to them separately as a training tool, not only for security purposes but also for infiltration. OSS conducts field ops against the various companies which Paragon provides, both to check the Paragon personnel for their defensive prowess as well as the infiltrators to determine how well they can slip in and out. As a side note, this practice also keeps the Paragon Security personnel constantly wired, always on the lookout for a possible break-in. All in all, this is one of the most useful subdivisions of the OSS ever created.

At various points during the break-in, use the *Sensors* or *Recon* Skill of the Paragon Guards against the players *Stealth* score in a skill vs. skill contest.

Initially, the Paragon security people will not shoot to kill or maim. Very quickly however, following the failure to return designated callsigns, the Paragon personnel start to using more lethal tactics. There should not be more than twice the number of Guards as players on-site, plus the chief. The Chief may pop a Cyberswarm (See next Sidebar) if he feels the PCs will get away, but he will try to trap them first for maximum effectiveness.

Paragon Guard (big ones)

STR: 10 (+1) **DEX:** 9 (+1) **END:** 8 **INT:** 7 **EDU:** 7 **SOC:** 6

Skills: Gun Combat (Pistol 2, Shotgun 1), Melee (Club 1), Recon 2, Sensors 1, Investigate 1

Equipment: They are armed with an Autopistol (3d6-3) or Shotgun (4d6,) and wearing Light Cloth Armor (AV: 3). They are also armed with stun batons (d6, 2d6 stun).

Paragon Guard (nimble ones)

STR: 6 **DEX:** 12 (+2) **END:** 8 **INT:** 7 **EDU:** 7 **SOC:** 6

Skills: Gun Combat (Pistol 2), Melee (Club 2), Recon 2, Sensors 1, Investigate 1

Equipment: They are armed with an Autopistol (3d6-3) and wearing Light Cloth Armor (AV: 3). They are also armed with stun batons (d6, 2d6 stun).

Paragon Chief

STR: 10 (+1) **DEX:** 10 (+1) **END:** 8 **INT:** 8 **EDU:** 7 **SOC:** 8

Skills: Athletics (Coordination 1), Comms 1, Gun Combat (Pistol 4), Melee (Club 2), Recon 3, Sensors 2, Investigate 3

Equipment: Gauss pistol (3d6, Auto 4, Recoil -1), stun baton (d6, 2d6 stun) and wearing Cloth Armor (AV: 5). The chief also has a Cyberswarm canister (noted above).

Palate Cleansers

If possible, the Referee might want to try to break up the action here a little with a short sub-plot encounter or scene. By this point in the Campaign, the players have probably begun to identify their own objectives within the confines of the Setting (although not necessarily the plot). For example, if one player expresses a desire to obtain a grav-belt, present him with the opportunity to acquire it. If the players expressed an interest in chasing down the Takara, have a lead suddenly bob to the surface. Make it something non-combat oriented so that the players have time to slow down a bit just before you whack them with the Strike Team.



1-Ton Cyber Swarm

Power Supply: Solar Cell

Type: Flying

Endurance: 30 (1 d-ton)

Movement: 9/18 meters

Damage: 2d6

Skills: Fly 1, Recon 1

rest of the round, the Swarm have to settle over them again to "reacquire". One useful tactic against smaller cyberswarms is for individuals to split apart. The Swarms will usually stay with one of them (the one they consider to be more damaged).

Swarms are rated for their equivalent size in hydrogen displacement tonnage, just like ships. Each dton is an additional 1.5mx1.5m area the swarm fills. A 1-Ton Swarm has 30 Endurance, does 2d6 damage and moves at 9 (attacking) or 18 (not attacking). This has been determined to be the optimal size of cyberswarms on the low-end of the scale, but larger swarms are certainly possible. Swarms can combine, but will not unless they are either programmed to do so or have sustained major damage and are attempting to combine to form a single swarm with greater size. Although damage remains steady at 2d6, recall that swarms attack *everyone* enveloped inside of them, which can make cyberswarms very dangerous and formidable opponents when they are many meters across or cover entire battlefields. **Game Mechanics to handle this will appear in upcoming Terrasol products.**

Cyberswarm attack

As a swarm of gnat sized creatures spills from the cylinder. Tactically, every bookwire and seminar says the same thing: RUN. But there are a whole host of collateral targets nearby including a number of children. What do you do?

At some point during either the Break-in at the Orphanage or the chase by the OSS Strike Team, the Referee should drop in a Cyberswarm attack. It is appropriate in either setting, the sort of desperation move the OSS is capable of, and sets the tone nicely. It should however be used when dramatically appropriate, thus the Referee discretion.

One of the purposes of this encounter is to ask the players if they are indeed any better or different from their rogue OSS opponents who will risk vast numbers of individuals in the name of protecting the species. On a smaller scale here the players are faced with the dilemma of running from the swarm which would probably slow to attack bystanders thus allowing them time to escape or staying and defending these individuals from this despicable attack. Referees should feel free to call the players attention to there actions. Perhaps a nearby mother pushing her baby in a stroller; or A family eating ice cream cones; or even a nearby uplifted canine trailed by nine puppies. What choice will

the players make? If they make the same one as the OSS it should be pointed out to them at some point during the adventure.

The best way to deal with a cyberswarm, as mentioned above, is to run. Keeping ahead of the swarm at all costs is important. Per the *Game Mechanics* section in the Player Insert, the swarm only does damage after they envelop a given character. If a character can move "free" of the swarm and stay so for the



The latter method is least preferred, as it will draw the attention of bystanders and local authorities. Referees are free to develop their own methods for the strike team hit.

When the strike team does attack, they shoot to kill. They operate as a well-coordinated team, seeking cover, focusing fire on high profile targets, etc. The strike team consists of four men and is well armed and armored, wearing body armor and carrying advanced combat rifles (ACR). The Vehicles they are using are actually standard civilian models, stolen for cover. Make the vehicles the match of any that the players have to keep the chase interesting.

The strike team does not flee unless they begin to suffer casualties; they will then attempt to escape as quickly as possible. Strike team members that are captured will not talk to the players under any circumstances.

Deus ex Cybil Mar

If the players are significantly out-matched, Cybil Mar or local authorities can arrive and disrupt the strike team's attack: the locals because the OSS has ignored them (and thus has no real means to call them off at short notice); Mar because she wants the PCs to prove their mettle, not get killed. She has been keeping track of them (as part of the OSS detail since she is presently in disguise amongst the group) since their first meeting.

In fact, this is probably the only reason why the players would survive this kind of a hit: organizations like the OSS have dozens upon dozens of people and heavy military grade equipment to send at the players. She works behind the scenes to make certain the back-up squad doesn't join in when the Players start to pull themselves out of the fire.

The agents-in-charge (half as many as there are players) have the same stats as Lynch and Needham (upgrade their equipment as below however and add Rifle 2 to skills) but the other members of the team aren't full Agents:

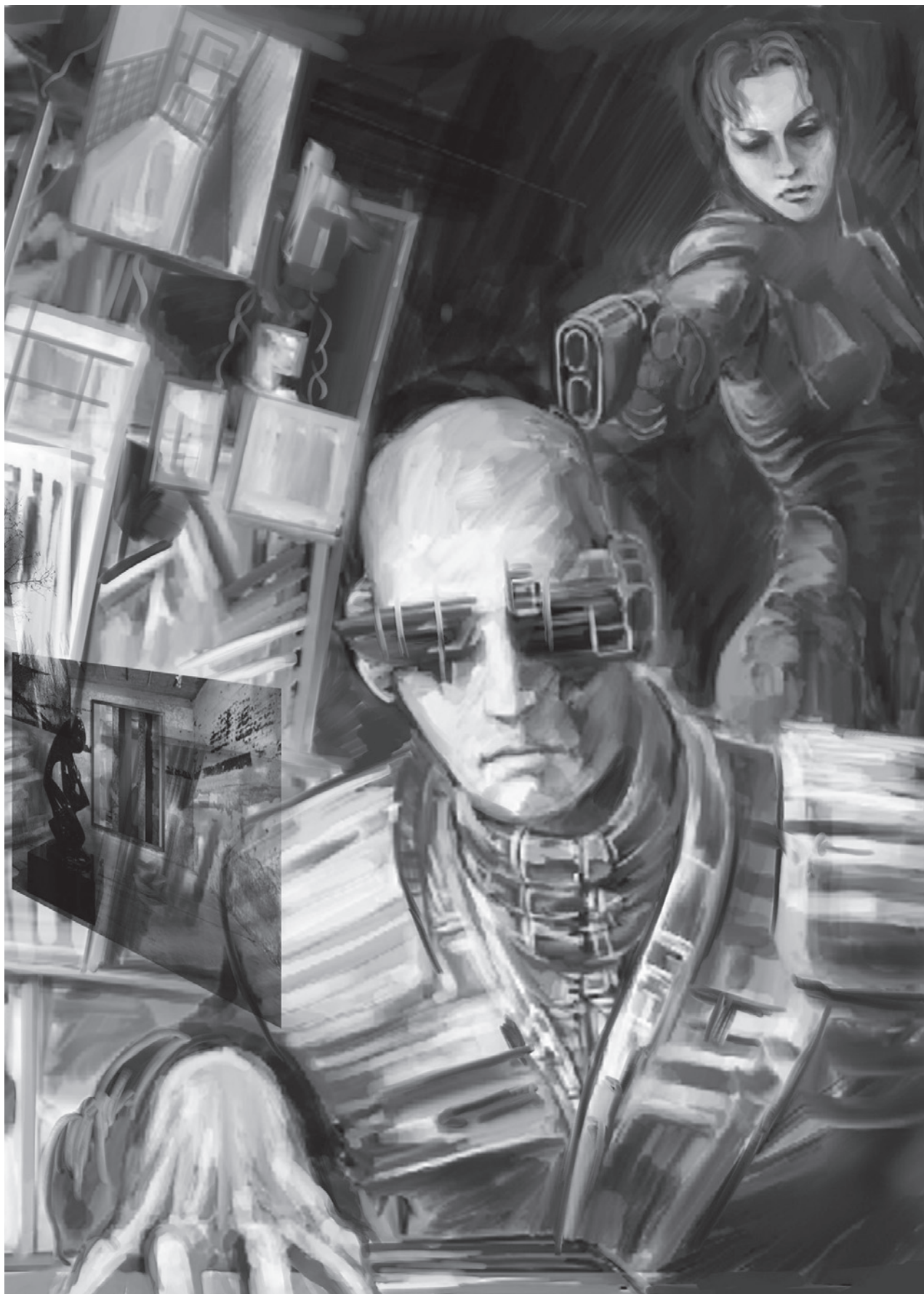
Strike Team Extras

STR: 8 **DEX:** 7 **END:** 8 **INT:** 7 **EDU:** 8 **SOC:** 7

Skills: Admin 1, Deception 1, Drive 2, Gun Combat (Pistol 1, ACR 2), Melee (Club 2), Recon 1, Sensors 1, Stealth 2, Streetwise 1, plus appropriate Mission skill: 1

Equipment: Autopistol (3d6-3) or ACR (3d6, Auto: 6, Recoil 0) Reinforced Light Armor (AV: 7), "Sun visors" which incorporate IR and Light Intensification. Three stun grenades and a stun baton.

Part Two: London Calling



PART II, ACT THREE: STATE SECRETS

With the OSS clearly out to get them, the players use this scene to take the fight to their enemy and attempt to infiltrate an OSS facility to learn its secrets.

Set-Up

Following the hit by an OSS strike team, the players should realize the seriousness of their investigations. It becomes evident that the length the OSS is willing to go to in order to cover up their activities is significant and the players are in real danger. The information gathered by the players at the orphanages suggests that the OSS is culpable in the fake adoption of countless children into unknown hands. This information however, lacks any concrete proof of the activities of the OSS, nor does it reveal the location of dozens of children presumably adopted by the agency. The players have only touched on the activities of the OSS and will require more if they are to bring these events to light.

Players analyzing the information gathered from the orphanages will find that a great deal of data lists the same address for a number of sources. Staff members listing this location as a residence, the address used as a reference for donor organizations and even government contacts all point to a single location. Players looking into this address find that it is a sizeable office building that doubles as an apartment complex on the outskirts of downtown. No other information about the location can be found.

Using these encounters

The Objective for this portion of the adventure is to end with the players getting all of the data they need and discovering that the “big operation” coming up is tied to the Precursor Project. This is enough to convince Cybil that she has to move immediately.

This portion of the adventure is again very linear. If the Cyberswarm attack was not employed in the last adventure, it would make an excellent “parting shot” for the OSS here, trying to kill the players to keep the data they stole “safe”. Remember that most of the OSS are fanatics, convinced of their own righteous cause, and they act accordingly.

ANOTHER MEETING

After the attack by the strike team, the players are once again contacted by the mysterious Cybil Mar. She calls one of the players and asks to arrange a meeting at a public park in the middle of the day. She tells the players she knows of the attack and has information that will help them hurt the OSS even more.

The Players get a message from Cybil to meet with her at Trafalgar Square at noon (unless of course she pulled their fat out of the fire in the Strike Team, even then she will have to dispose of the bodies and needs some time to do so.)

As a reminder for the Referee:

You can use the Audio Files "Cybil leaves a message" here.

When the players meet Cybil, she is dressed more plainly (attempting to blend in with the public). As soon as they meet up, she steers them towards one of the alcoves just off the street. Once there, she again activates her "Husher" before asking the players what they managed to uncover at the orphanages. Cybil is quite concerned with the safety of the players and is clearly disturbed by the actions of the OSS. If the

As a reminder for the Referee:
You can use the Audio Files "Cybil Mar in Trafalgar Square" here.

characters have difficulty trusting this mysterious woman, she is willing to offer her personal assistance from this point out to help the players.

If the players have not discovered the unusual address (87559 Brown, Cameron Center) in the orphanage records, Cybil points this out for them. If the players were unable to recover any information from the orphanages, Cybil can steer the players towards the address downtown.

Her Pitch

Cybil tells the players the following...

- The location you found is an OSS front used as offices and dormitories for agents in London.
- The OSS secrets keeps its dirty secrets there, but with your help I can gain access to in order to uncover concrete proof of the OSS's illegal activities.
- I would like to help you infiltrate the Complex. We can use the information in it to reveal the secrets of the OSS and establish solid links to the activities taking place in the orphanages.
- I will personally help you to infiltrate this building, but it's even more heavily secured than the orphanages. Still, it can be done.
- Look, I've been working undercover inside the OSS now for some time, gathering what

I can. But it isn't enough, not by far. Not enough to do real damage. But I do have access to the building, which will make the operation a lot easier to get the information we need to bring this thing down.

- In order to do anything substantial, I need your help.
- Something is going on inside, I've heard distant rumblings about some upcoming "big project". I don't know what it is, but I know that the way they are talking about it, you, me and anyone else with a shred of decency doesn't want any part of it. Folks... I need you.

If the players insist on performing the raid themselves: Cybil will argue against it but eventually yield as it becomes clear they do not trust her completely. Then she will say:

- I can provide you with an access card to gain entry into the building and codes to disable the security system once you reach the security office.

If the players are unwilling to investigate any further following the attack by the OSS strike team, Cybil will say...

- I understand where you are right now. But bringing these events to light will bring with it a great deal of fame. If you go public with what they know.
- You can do it now, but without proof...

She can also offer monetary rewards for less altruistic players.

Don't forget the Gravy

Cybil is also able to help the players acquire material they may need for the upcoming operation. She has access to equipment and weapons that the players may not and can even get some (mind you *some*) military grade equipment and weapons if they desire. She hooks players up with dealers who ask no questions. She also gives them all a version of the link she provided before so that they will be able to remain in constant contact through her secure comm. If the players indicate that they want to conceal their identity, she suggests fauxmasks (without compression), just enough to change their appearance. This is just to get them close.

Cybil will work with the players to establish a specific time to infiltrate the OSS building. She would prefer to strike immediately, but is willing to listen to reasonable arguments to wait. While the OSS would not suspect such a bold and immediate response on the part of the players, the Referee is encouraged to allow the Players to dictate the timing.

BENEATH THE SURFACE

With the help of Cybil Mar, the players have decided to infiltrate an OSS complex in search of information regarding the organization's illegal activities, specifically those pertaining to the operations of the orphanages.

The players and Cybil have chosen a time and date to launch their attack and Cybil has promised the players easy access to the complex. At a pre-selected time and place, the players and Cybil meet and make their way quickly and quietly to the OSS stronghold in London. While still technically located in downtown London, the Complex is located in a quiet corner industrial neighborhood that ensures foot traffic is kept to a minimum.

The OSS complex is built into the base of a nondescript block of mixed industrial facilities located just outside the center of the city in the Cameron Center. This neighborhood lays directly along the Thames River, and is a designated Industrial area, which means there is relatively little foot traffic and mostly robotic vehicles in and out of the various industrial complexes.

Technically the structure at 87559 Brown, Cameron Center is owned by **Nelson-Atkins Manufacturing** (Cybil confides that this is an OSS front company). The Nelson-Atkins Thames Complex (it's official name) is dwarfed by the structures that surround the neighborhood, primarily because of the conscious choice by designers to place shorter structures, like the Nelson-Atkins Thames Complex close to the river (this allows the River Thames to remain a visible part of the city, placing huge arcologies right next to the Thames would obscure it from sight).

Note that it is not uncommon for such Industrial facilities to contain residential barracks for their workers or for low-income residents. The listed addresses for the employees indicate that they are for the residential section within the Thames Complex.

Exterior Description:

The Nelson-Atkins Building appears to be a large, blocky structure hanging slightly over the water of the Thames River. In the center of the building, there is a tall spire with chromed windows that extends several stories above the roof of the main structure. The building is little different from any of the other blocky structures in this part of the district, and only has been made noteworthy for the distinctive N-A logo presented on the side of the Tower.

Would you like to be Notorious?

If the PCs have good Computer Skills, Cybil has a task for them to help her with prior to their becoming involved in the Scene of Part Two, Act III in which the team goes into the OSS Complex. She has a complicated program that still needs some tweaking.

Any characters who are interested can spend a Computer (Intelligence or Education, -2, 1-6 Hours) check on the Project. They may use their Computer system (DM: Rating-2) to improve their skill check as a "toolkit".

Make the roll now and note whether it is a success or failure and the effect of the check.

Players can make a *Recon (Intelligence, -2)* skill check to notice heavy security for the building in question. If the players opted to perform the operation without Cybil present, they must infiltrate the building without her help.

Interior Details:

The Interior of Nelson-Atkins

Manufacturing Thames Complex is 90% standard Industrial workplace, known as the factory Floor. Almost all of the work is actually done by robots in a never ending dance of motion, the few human technicians are all OSS support staff. Much of the main floor of the Complex (two to three storeys tall depending on where one is looking) is open through most of the structure, except for some repair and office sections (such as the Security office, detailed below) along the Eastern face of the building which are parceled off as individual rooms.

There is also an inner tower at the center of the Industrial floor that operates as a kind of central column for the whole structure. It extends upward for seven stories up, four past the Industrial portion of the structure.

The Robot Workers occupy the "Congested Space" on the map shown. A tangle of machinery, robots, conveyors and such that counts as soft cover and "firing into combat" but can be dangerous.

The Tower is the heart of the OSS Complex: The first three floors of the tower are reserved for offices where the OSS conducts day-to-day business and runs their operations while the top four floors (extending above the Industrial area) are used as apartments by agents. The building also possesses three sub-levels that are unknown to anyone outside the OSS. These sub-levels house the building's secure computer systems (aka The vault Archive), the OSS armories and labs.

Part Two: London Calling

One location of note on the first floor of the Factory Floor is the security office, located inward (adjacent to the inner working area) across from the base of the Tower. This office is used to oversee building security and coordinate the activities of the multiple armed guards patrolling the building. An armed guard is always present in the security office who maintains radio contact over the four other security personnel on patrol at all times in the building. If anything goes wrong, security guards call for backup. An OSS strike team (use the stats from above) will respond in only two minutes if any alarms are sounded. Use the same stats as above for the guards.

Goin' in Sans Cybil

Entering the building without this access key requires players to make an *Electronics (Education, -2)* or *Deception (Dexterity, -4)* skill check to pick the lock, the check will require a base time interval of 1 minute.

Entering the Complex without Cybil will result in the Players having to either use an ally to hack into the system and shut down the cameras, create a significant distraction, or set off the equivalent of an EMP to fry the delicate electronics. While the main systems are hardened, the local lighting will be affected, allowing the players to penetrate the perimeter without detection.

Failure to do any of this will result in an altercation with 5+2d6 agents entering into combat with the characters. The initial five are the on-call combat team, and d3 agents arrive every minute afterward until the total rolled shows up to the party. Referees should allow Players to get creative in making some sort of diversion to reduce these odds; possibly even get rid of the guards altogether. It ought to be good though, not just some token effort but solid role-play.

What about the AI?

Simply put, there is none. In some facilities, the OSS uses highly sophisticated Intellect programs in their place, but these are not true AI, just expert systems which have been maximized. They lack the particular advantages of true AI.

The reason is twofold: First, as sentients, AI gain full rights of citizenship at the age of 18 and can leave their sponsors. Second, AI tend to be highly rational beings, and the OSS – particularly the Terra/Sol Division – is based on a fervor that AI cannot always understand: a little bit paranoia and a kind of jingoistic nationalism they cannot share. This makes the suspect.

A Quiet Entry:

Cybil will lead the group to the back of the building where she will use an access key to gain entry to the building. Before they enter, she tells the players that gunfire or other loud noises will result in their quick capture.

*When entering the building, Cybil does not attempt to remain hidden — the number and location of the cameras throughout the building will make it impossible **not** to be seen. Instead, she moves quietly and quickly into the building, making her way to the security office on the ground floor.*

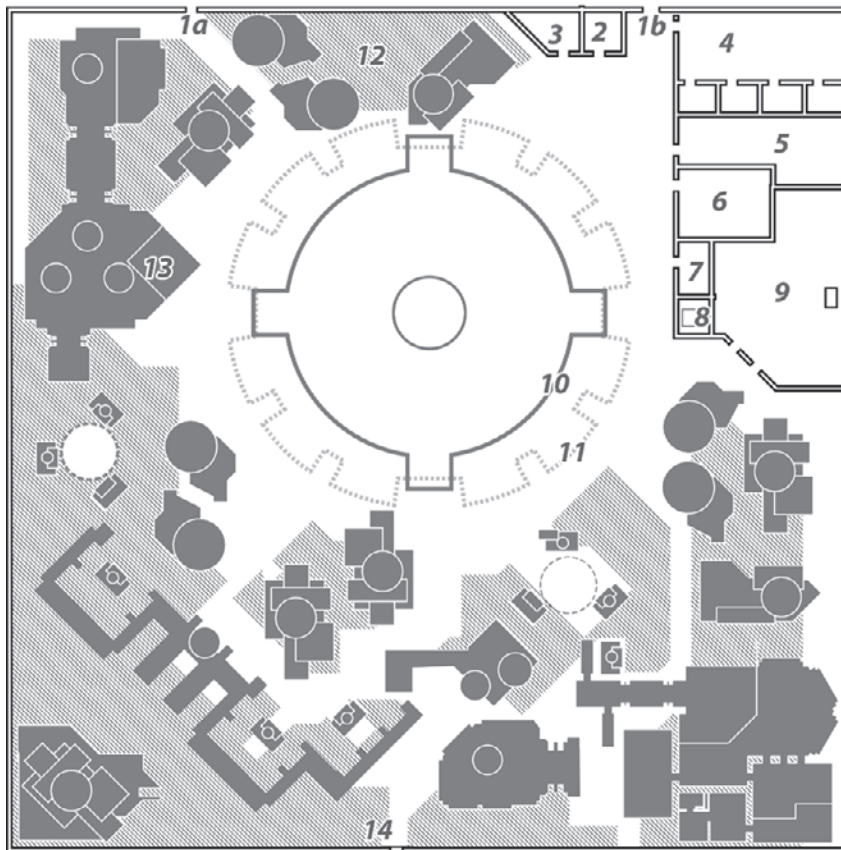
This is where the descriptions of the Industrial floor and any other components go. If entering the facility with Cybil...

Cybil walks straight into the Security Office. Once reaching the office, Cybil will attack the guard with her stunner, knocking him out quickly and quietly. Players may make a Recon (Intelligence, -3) skill check to notice that the guard had not sounded the alarm, although he clearly was able to see the players entering on the cameras with Cybil and seemed to recognize Cybil herself when she enters the Office.

When the guard has been dealt with, Cybil sits in the strangely elaborate main console chair. As her fingers begin to dance over the console command keys she says that she is using the security computer system to deactivate the cameras (and wipe out all recent recordings) as well as all of the other security features currently active throughout the building. Anyone watching the vidpanels will see that this is what is being shown on-screen as well.

Cybil will then tell the players that she must remain at the security station to ensure alarms are not sounded (if pressed, and only if pressed, she will reveal the Shepherd Failsafe used in the office). Meanwhile the players will use the elevators to travel to a sub-level of the building where the OSS computer records are housed on secure, offline systems.

From there, Cybil says that the players can gain access to the information they're looking for regarding OSS activities in the Vault Archive. She gives the players her access card as well as telling them a code to be used so they can access the computer and the names of some of the files they need to start searching for. She also gives them links so that she will remain in constant contact with the players through her secure comm.



Thames Complex

Key:



- 1 Public Entrances/Exits
- 2 Security Checkpoint
- 3 Rover Storage
- 4 Office Pool
(with individual offices)
- 5 Employee Lounge
- 6 Security Office
- 7 Restrooms
- 8 Express Elevator
- 9 River Overhang
- 10 Residence Tower Base
- 11 Tower Line (3 levels up)
- 12 Congested Space
(Robot Machinery)
- 13 Major Automated
Systems (typical)
- 14 Blue & Green Robot
(with smiley face)

Scale in meters
3 6 9 12 15

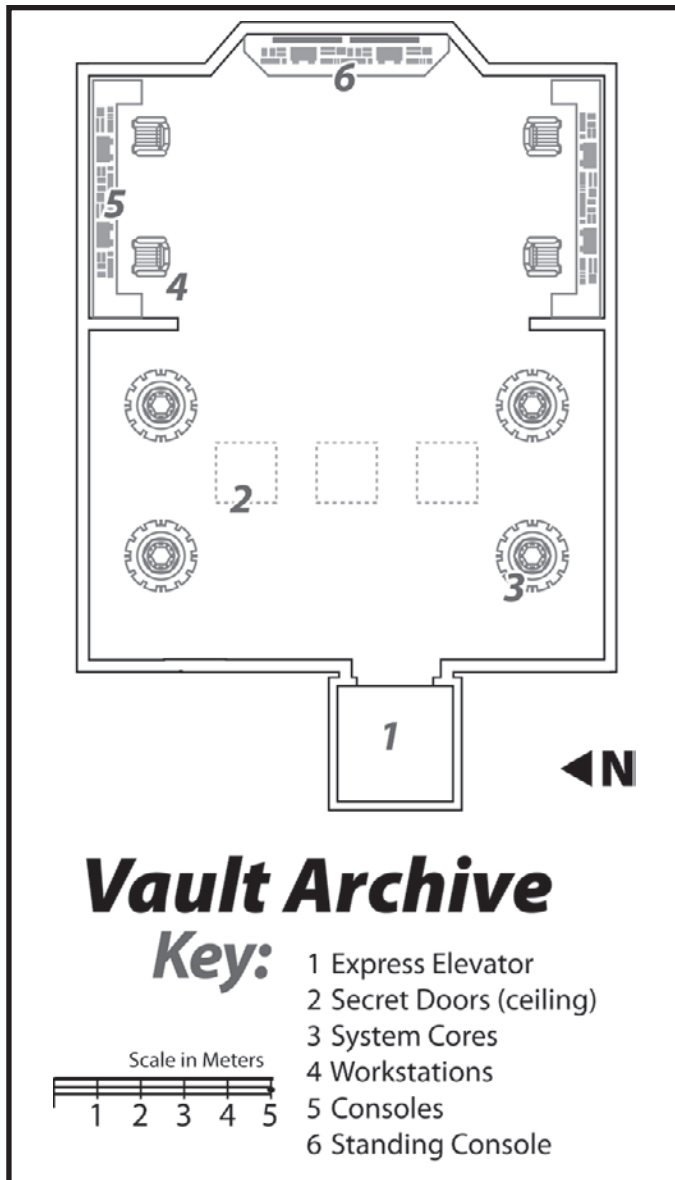
And I Need You Again 'Why'?

Hopefully, by this point, the Players are not going to be asking themselves why they bother to come along. The truth of the matter is that Cybil needs their bodies (ahem, no really). Having created a host of enemies with special abilities, like Cybil Mar herself, the OSS has also taken some pains to reduce the effectiveness of 'rogue elements' against them. One of the reasons that Cybil has not been able to acquire the files she needs is that there is a **Shepherd Failsafe** in the Security Office. In order for the lower levels of the Compound to open up, someone with the proper genetic sequence (which Cybil has recently been keyed to in her undercover identity) has to open doors and maintain a constant presence in the security room. Effectively, this person in security (who must be alive and capable of operating controls) holds the equivalent of a digital deadman's switch for the Vault. If the Shepherd (the person coded into the system) is not in the chair, or fails to enter the proper codes that randomly pop up, the doors to the Vault seal themselves and the chamber is then pumped with a Halon-type gas to evacuate the air.

The OSS as counting on a certain personality type that accompanies these rogue elements. Specifically their lack of trust, which makes it less likely that they will work with someone else. Cybil is no exception, in fact she is even less trusting than other rogues. The Players timely arrival however, and their competence in dealing with the Takara (as well as perseverance in going with her this far) make them her unique 1-in-50 chance to get in and get what she needs. But she needs *them* to do it for *her*. This makes her more of a patron than an all-powerful NPC.

So the players are not simply Cybil's marionettes, she absolutely *needs* them in order to complete her mission. She is averse to hiring mercenaries, generally untrusting of others, and has watched the players get as far as they have from a distance before she decided to meet with them. As soon as OSS revealed itself, she knew that she had kindred spirits to work with on her immediate goal.

This is the "Cybil Option." If Cybil is not with them, then having this Shepherd Failsafe would spell instant doom. Thus ignore it, as the Failsafe is only a tool to make the players the focus of the action, not an NPC. Should the players themselves do this, by freezing Cybil out for example, they have accomplished the same goal on their own and this is an unneeded option.



The Scrap

One of the network messages connected to the Precursor file is a status report from an off-world agent named "Fastov" sent directly to Director Adams. The full version of the file is in the Player Inserts section.

The upshot is this: a critical component for the weaponization of the Adams Retrovirus (see Part Three) has to be manufactured outside of a major gravity well *and* has to be created just before the virus is released. The email indicates that the component is nearing completion and that there are only six days until it is delivered to the King William Island Complex.

This suggests a timeline and a potential infiltration option for the King William Island Complex which lay at the heart of the next part of the campaign.

THE VAULT ARCHIVE

Presumably at this point, the players leave Cybil at the security station and quickly reach the elevators she has indicated for them. As they approach the elevators, the keypad next to them lights up in quick sequence and the doors slide open (This is Cybil, controlling the codes from the Security Office). She reminds them they need to swipe her card to access the sub-levels of the OSS block.

Using Cybil's access card, the doors slide shut and the players are quickly taken to sub-level two, deep beneath the surface of the city.

The Elevator takes a considerable amount of time to descend, and when the elevator doors finally open again, the Players will at first see nothing outside of them but a pitch black empty space. A second later, the overhead lights turn on and the players find themselves in a large open room containing rows of computer terminals. Fans beat overhead, and the room has a chemical odor.

"Ignore the smell team, that's just the way it works. Time to get to work, you can access the OSS computers using any one of these terminal.."

What she doesn't mention is that the chemical smell comes from the Halon system, which evacuates the oxygen from the room if there is no one in the Security Room on the Industrial Floor above.

Referee's Note: Players can quickly transfer the information from the computers to their own devices with little difficulty using the equipment and programs that Cybil has provided them. If the players have dispensed with Cybil's assistance, they will have to make a *Computers (Intelligence, -3)* skill check in order to reduce the counter-intrusion and anti-copying routines built into the system.

- ▷ If the players use the access code given to them by Cybil, they can gain quick and easy access to the computers. Players will notice when they use the codes provide that the computer chimes back "Welcome Director Adams" and "Secure Mode" (which bypasses biometric requirements). It appears Cybil gave the players Director-Level access to the information in the system.
- ▷ Players not using Cybil's code must make a *Computers (Intelligence, -6, 1-6 minutesx3)* skill check to access the computer systems. Players will find the computer systems top of the line and containing quite a few advanced software packages.

- ▷ Digging through the computer systems to find information regarding the OSS's connection to the orphanages with Director-level Access is easy. A *Computers (Intelligence, +0, 1-6 minutes)* skill check is required, success indicating the players can locate a large batch of files containing information about the orphanages and their use by the OSS. These files have information regarding the adoption of children from the orphanages, the approval of the orphanages to adopt children to the *Takara* in Kansas City as well as the funneling of funds to the orphanages from the OSS [Referee Note: this is the data that they will need to establish the connections found in the Orphanage files.]
- ▷ Also included in the records of adoption, the players are able to find references to a 'Precursor Project.' These indicate that many children were sent to a facility located on King William Island to be used for the Precursor Project. As soon as they begin to peruse the Precursor file itself, the system literally begins to cannibalize itself. They do escape with a scrap however. (see sidebar)

Breach Protocol

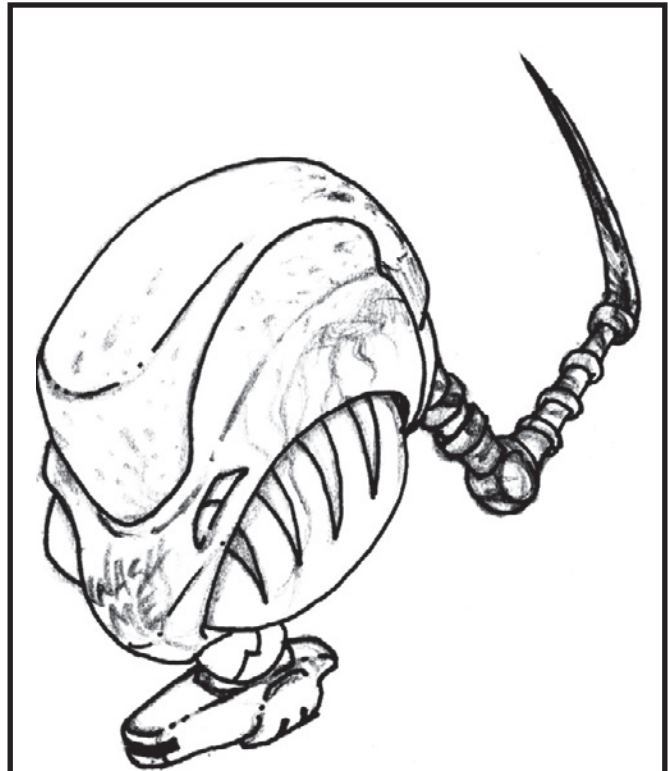
The self-destruct program was apparently linked to a password that had to be used without so much as a prompt.

Cybil curses in their ears, such traps are only used for particularly high level data. The Screens of all the computers in the chamber activate and begin to purge their data. The Words "BREACH PROTOCOL" are visible on every screen. The Breach Protocol also triggers the Hellbots.

"Hey team," Cybil chirps in their ears, "obviously something's wrong here. The Security Board is going crazy and the system is trying to access the alarms. Get out of there. Now!" The Elevator door however has gone crazy, opening and closing rapidly (and dangerously, those are not your standard safety doors).

Cybil will tell them that she is trying to keep the doors open, and the only reason that they aren't sealed off down there (which would also shut off the lights, trigger the Halon system and deprive them of oxygen) is because she is actively defending them from the Breach Protocol Program.

This is also when the Players are introduced with the Robots designed specifically to take out intruders that have penetrated deep into the OSS file chamber: the Hellbots (see sidebar for stats)



They Can't be that Bad...

Actually they aren't, but what makes the Hellbot "hellish" isn't how tough they are (indeed, these are designed to *not* cause swaths of destruction- no PGMP or other explosives for example), it is the fact that they are autonomous, Intellect-driven Robots rather than Drones.

The use of autonomous robots for security and combat duties is expressly forbidden by law and not too smart to boot. But the OSS does not trust AI systems in its most delicate facilities (remember, at 18, they gain the rights of citizens and leave service) thus the organization needs something that is capable of operating on their own. The Intellect Program of the Hellbots have been given a very aggressive profile. Once unleashed, they make nasty opponents.

Unfortunately for the players, the OSS likes their hellbots and uses them in multiple facilities. Likely, this will not be the first of these metallic monstrosities that the players will encounter.

Hellbots

STR: 12 (+2) **DEX:** 10 (+1) **Hull:** 4, **Structure:** 4
INT: 9(+1) **EDU:** 7 **SOC:** 0 (-3)

Traits: Armor 10, Integral System (Grav floater), Integral Weapon/Ranged (Laser Rifle, 5d6+3), Integral Weapon/Melee (Tail Spike, 4d6+2, halves armor)

Onboard Skills: Flyer 2, Gun Combat (Wpn System 3), Melee (Tail Spike 2), Recon 2, Sensors 2, Stealth 2

Part Two: London Calling

Bring out the Hellbots

Rather than yet another living guard, the players must face off against the Hellbots, a customized robot design that was commissioned by the OSS specifically and illegally (given that they are autonomous combat models).

Description:

A panel in the ceiling over the elevator door slides open, revealing a trio of robots on grav floaters that drop quickly into the open space. They have a underslung energy weapon of some kind and a articulated spike that bobs behind them like a cross between a cat and scorpion tail. The robots are clad in gleaming chrome but they look like they have been sprayed with blood some time ago. One of them has the words "Wash Me" written onto the front plate with someone's finger.

- ▶ [In Best Robot Voice] "Step forward and surrender. You will be granted leniency if you surrender immediately."

If any of the players attempt to escape before the Bots are taken out, refer below. The Door should start opening and closing immediately as soon as the Hellbots arrive.

In their ear, they can hear Cybil Mar trying to deal with the Security Subroutines muttering in French and Japanese as she does. She will tell them this as they fight. (One item per round)

- ▶ Okay team, those are the Hellbots from the Arsenal Level. That's something new....
- ▶ I've spared with these things. The trick is to keep moving, they have a tracking issue.
- ▶ The sensor is on the left so try and keep to the right and stay moving.

The players who are on the right-hand side of the Hellbots and have moved in that round (even to just 'bob and weave' in place) will get a +1/-1 DM in combat (whatever is worse for the Robot, that is: +1 to PC attacks on them, -1 to attacks on PC's on the right side).

ESCAPE!

After the Hellbots have been dealt with, the characters will have to get back inside of the elevator.

Unfortunately, Cybil is still dealing with a particularly nasty security subroutine designed to prevent anyone who accessed the Vault Archive from leaving. The result of her constant struggles with the system is that the door keeps opening and shutting. Players will require players to

make a *Dexterity* (-2) Characteristic check or an *Athletics/Coordination* (*Dexterity*, 0) skill check to successfully enter the lift without harm (use the margin of failure as a gauge to how much damage they sustain from the doors if they fail the check).

Players who successfully get inside the elevator will find that the platform does not ascend immediately. It takes two or three stabs of the panel before the elevator lurches into action. Once in motion, she says the following:

- ▶ "The alarm has gone off, nothing more to be done for it. Unfortunately It also means that the doors in and out of the Complex are now all sealed tight."
- ▶ [*She waits for the groan response*] "Which is why I placed charges on the South Wall of the building, next to a large Blue-and-Green robot worker. Can't miss him. I even painted a smiley face on him."
- ▶ [*There is a new alarm going off, one that keens in a stuttering wail*] "Okay, I just told the system that there's a biohazard breach. It will be a while before most of the Agents can get out of their rooms."
- ▶ Some were able to get out and are headed to your location. So heads up when the elevator stops. See you at the South Wall."

From here, the question is exactly how long the players were dallying in the Archive.

- ▷ If the Players took off quickly (including escaping from the Hellbots before or during their attack rather than staying to fight them entirely), they are able to get to the Main floor well before the guards arrive. Kudos to them, they have a considerable head-start.
- ▷ If the players took more than a few combat rounds to deal with the Hellbots, the players have a moment's warning before the elevator doors open and the guards arrive.
- ▷ If the players took a considerable time, Cybil's commlink shuts down and her last words were: "they are going to be there before you, surrender." She will (unknown to the Players) attack the guards from the rear of the building

Cue the Guards:

Initially, there are two guards, both armed with automatic weapons and wearing armor. The rest of the floor detail (six in total) will arrive at the elevators quickly. How quickly is up to individual Referees.

If the players get to the top first (with something of a head-start or just barely in time), they can try to hide from the guards by making a *Stealth* (*Dexterity*, -3) skill check to take cover amongst

Pardon moi, do you Parkour?

One interesting option at this point for characters with some Athletics ability is to try to parkour their way out of the area. Parkour, according to a committee of *traceur* is the “physical discipline of training to overcome any obstacle within one’s path by adapting one’s movements to the environment” (a *traceur* (male) or *traceuse* (female) is a practitioner of this athletic form). The factory floor, jammed as it is with machinery and robots, is an excellent area to utilize these skills for a quick exit. It is not as easy as simply walking out, but it has the advantage of being cool. Unfortunately, one has to have the skills: in this case either Athletics (Coordination) or Athletics (Endurance) to pull this off. In this case, the area is perfect for Parkour, but the time factor and chase factor are important as well: make the check with a -2 DM. How well they do (higher effects) determines how quickly they move: a marginal success might mean they move at half speed, with an effect of three or more, the players are moving at or near their full normal speed, ignoring all of the obstacles in their way between themselves and the exit. Referees can have some fun with the descriptions as the players careen off of swinging arms, perform acrobatic pop vaults and leap off of robotic workers. If this is the Players idea rather than the Referees, the guards will be somewhat hapless in the face of this tactic. That not only preserves a cinematic feel for the scene but rewards them for a cool exit.

the nearby maze of industrial machinery. Seeing the Elevator unoccupied (the doors will remain open when the elevator car is at the top, this is part of the Breach Protocol), the guards will move through the room searching for anything out of the ordinary. Make contested *Recon v Stealth* checks. If the players are detected, the guard responds by calling for backup (silently) and then attempts to apprehend the players.

Straying into the “Congested Area” is both risky and helpful. It counts as Soft cover and as “firing into Combat” for those trying to hit them with ranged weapons. It penalizes the players similarly unless they use an “Aim” action to aim between the machinery parts. Referees should also call on the player to make **Dexterity** or *Athletics* (Coordination) checks at random intervals or take (Ref determined) damage. The more the PCs use it, the more dangerous this area gets.

If the characters are taken (or are forced to surrender when the lift reaches the top because they lingered too long inside of the sub-level chamber), Cybil will provide them with an opening by dropping a series of stun behind the guards that allow the PCs to ‘make a break for it’.

A Particularly exciting method of escape is suggested in the sidebar above, using Parkour to vault and climb and leap across the congested areas of the factory.

If the Players took out the Guards too easily, have the Hellbots get unleashed. Even if there is only one or two, it might keep the escape more thrilling. Remember: the key here is ‘action!’ Keep them moving constantly, make sure that they get that sense of leaving the lion’s den and the thrill that ought to come from the accomplishment.

Making an Exit

Once the Guards are either dealt with or the PCs are going for the Southern edge of the plant, they will see the following:

Description:

The machinery along the Southern Edge of the Complex is involved with some sort of metal folding activity. As the players approach, they see that one of the machines quite close to the wall has a neon green-colored “smiley face” painted on the surface.

[If they get within 20 meters] An explosion rips out of the area nearest the wall, sending up a plume of smoke and a earth-shaking rattle but neither concussion nor fragmentation (which would make it a tamped charge of some kind). It will take a while – nearly a minute – for the smoke to clear completely. What do you do?

[Referee Note: Their commlink frequency sets the bomb off when they get close (not too close). This was to facilitate their escape should Cybil be captured] Players that dive through the smoke will be in the clear, evading their pursuers in the smoke and chaos. Players that hesitate gain nothing.

Thames Complex Guards

STR: 8 **DEX:** 9 (+1) **END:** 8 **INT:** 7 **EDU:** 8 **SOC:** 6

Skills: Gun Combat (Pistol 2, Shotgun 2), Melee (Club 2), Recon 2, Sensors 1

Equipment: Autopistol (3d6-3) and Shotgun (4d6,) Reinforced Light Armor (AV: 7), One stun grenade disguised as a Hand Commlink (they have earpiece comms for real tactical use) and a stun baton.

Referees may also want to throw in an Agent (page 61 after a few rounds.

LEAVING LONDON

If the players manage to escape the OSS building with the information, they will have earned Cybil Mar's gratitude. She takes the characters to an abandoned warehouse in the local area (an industrial zone that was struck by fire and not yet redeveloped) where the group can rest – momentarily – and explore the information they recovered. She tells them they have at best twenty minutes before they have to go.

If any of the players are injured, Cybil can attempt to perform first aid on them (if one of the other players does not have the skills or equipment to do so) but she is obviously in a hurry.

Paydirt?

The information the players recovered shows that the OSS is clearly using the orphanages as ways of obtaining children for their clandestine operations. It is also evident that OSS officials were fully aware of the nature of the Takara of Kansas City and allowed the cannibalistic cult to adopt dozens of children from the same orphanages.

While the information the players acquired is enough to cause problems for the OSS, Cybil is clearly concerned when the Precursor Project is mentioned. She admits to being familiar with the project and now feels this is the “big push” they have been talking about. It is now clear to her that some of the children from the orphanages are being taken to an OSS facility located on King William Island in the Republic of Chicago. At this facility, the children are being experimented on using alien technology discovered by the OSS when Terra/Sol was colonized. Cybil cannot provide much more information apart from telling the players that she has been to that facility many years ago but only for a brief time and is unaware of the extent of the current OSS operations there.

The Next Step

Cybil asks that the players help her go to that facility and stop the OSS from further experimenting on innocent children. Though the

players could go to the press regarding the actions of the OSS and the orphanages, revealing to the public that alien ruins exist on Terra/Sol and that the OSS is using this technology to experiment on children would all but cripple the organization as a whole and have a lasting impact throughout the galaxy. Cybil appeals the players' sense of morality, justice and thirst for knowledge.

If this is not enough to convince the players to help her, she promises them she can pay them a great deal of money if they are able to bring this truth to light. She is desperate, and she now trusts the characters about as much as she trusts anyone. (Their actions of course are going to modify that statement).

If the players agree to help her, Cybil has arranged transportation to Chicago where they will set out to the mysterious and isolated King William Island.

THE NEXT ACT

The players have dealt a serious blow to the OSS by recovering the information linking the agency to the operations of the orphanages and the adoptions of children to the Takara and a variety of other mysterious families. Players can choose to go public with this information immediately, but doing so will make them fugitives all across Terra/Sol and the Orion Confederation. By waiting, the players can maintain a somewhat lower profile, which can allow them easier access to King William Island and the secrets it holds.

With Cybil Mar helping them, the players will have a much easier time reaching the OSS facility in the Republic of Chicago. Without her help, the players will have a harder time infiltrating the facility and living long enough to bring the information they gain there to light. Though the players may not trust her fully, Cybil has learned that she can trust the players and that together they face a common foe. Cybil will do everything she can to have the players help her; through them, she believes she can bring down the OSS. The direction for the players is clear: they must reach King William Island and uncover the secrets the OSS have been keeping for over a century.

The Need for Speed:

As soon as the Players escape from the Thames Complex, take account of the time because the OSS is coming. Cybil's window of opportunity, produced by the “Notorious” Dataworm assault (which is causing havoc with the Internal Security Network or IntSec even as the Players sit in the warehouse), is about a half-hour to an hour or so. She wants to be in North America by then and has already pre-paid for tickets, her twenty minute time frame is barely enough time for them to get there and take off.

PART THREE: OPENING THE DOOR

Note: None of the information presented in this chapter is common knowledge.

THE STORY THUS FAR

What has gone before...

The players have stumbled upon a bizarre plot that threatens to shake the very foundation of Terra/Sol and will have an impact the Known Galaxy. The clandestine organization known as the Orion Security Service has long been engaged in falsely adopting children from two orphanages located in the planetary capital of London. These children are then scattered across Terra/Sol and used by the OSS for any number of dark purposes such as experimentation with alien technology...

With the help of the mysterious Cybil Mar, the players have learned of the location of this site and that many children adopted by the OSS have been sent here to be experimented on. The players have the opportunity to travel to King William Island in the hopes of learning all they can about the OSS's activities here and bringing them to light. They could also simply escape, and use what they have to expose the OSS for what they already have. The choice is theirs...

Behind the Scenes:

In 1945 a strange archeological discovery was made on King William Island, just off the extreme northeastern coast of North America. Initial investigations into the location revealed a strange complex of ruins that were clearly of non-human origin: One of many 'precursor' alien sites scattered throughout the known galaxy. Archeological excavations began immediately by civilians under Professor Dukette but were quickly halted when members of the Orion Security Service arrived and claimed an imminent threat, which allowed them to take control of the facility following a Supreme Court ruling in 1946. Since that time, all information about the site has been carefully controlled by the OSS and they have spent decades performing their own examination of the alien ruins.

Through their research, the OSS believes they have discovered the alien site's purpose. It appears that the site became active over a century ago, programmed to release a virus into the atmosphere of Terra/Sol; the OSS has discovered evidence that it was this virus that resulted in the explosion of 'natural' mutation throughout the population of the planet in 2856. Believing this to be an insidious plot by malign alien forces, the OSS has spent the last four decades attempting to undo the work of the alien virus. That involved experimenting on children taken from the orphanages in London. The OSS is now ready to use the alien site themselves. They have altered the alien virus and are releasing it (atmospherically) in the hopes of reversing the effects. This has the potential to kill millions of mutants that have emerged since the Transformation and that is deemed "acceptable" by the organization.

The Player's Endgame

There is none. Or at least, the adventure itself does not present the players with a simple means of mission success in a nicely wrapped bow. They must make their own plans for that. If they go into the final stages of the adventure without some sort of a plan, the players may well get caught and killed before they accomplish their objective.

It might behoove soft-hearted Referees to make mention to the players that they are in a "sandbox" when they get to the Island (Acts II): the scene is set and will proceed, there are no set actions, no cavalry to come for them (unless they have somehow managed that on their own). *Really* kindly Referees might remind Players of this as they enter into the last stage (Act III) and are walking through the *narrow* tunnel *that is the only way in or out as far as they can tell*. You know... subtly.



PART III, ACT ONE: GOING TO GROUND

The players arrive in Chicago just as the OSS is back on their trail. Next they have a choice: either to safely reach King William Island while avoiding detection, or to use the scrap of information they were able to obtain concerning an offworld component that the OSS Director of the Terra/Sol Division wants to incorporate into the Project (see Scrap Sidebar).

Cybil Mar and the players are escaping London after their raid on the OSS Thames Complex. They were able to gain evidence that the agency is responsible for the false adoptions of countless children from orphanages in London. However there is a new wrinkle: data recovered from the facility has revealed another, much larger, OSS base located on King William Island and pointed to something called the *Precursor Project*. The project may be involved with exposing these children to alien technology for experimentation purposes. They have also uncovered that a “Big Operation” is getting ready to proceed within six days, something which alarms Cybil Mar.

This faces them with a choice: either run away now or take the fight to the OSS now that they are committed to it and know of this upcoming major operation. If they choose to escape, the Campaign is over, but their actions will have significant impact on Terra and beyond. If they choose to act, the team will attempt to reach King William Island to discover proof of these vile operations and possibly halt the “big operation” that Cybil Mar has been hearing about for months.

Using the Material

This Part assumes that the players want to move forward into this dangerous mission. While there are two major options described here, the adventure starts with the madcap race to get as far away as possible from the OSS and hide in one of the populated cities of Terra. From that point, the players themselves need to decide how to proceed, although two options are illuminated for those (either Players or Referees) who wish. Players and Referees are (as ever) free to devise something of their own that they feel will better capture the spirit of the adventure and indeed they are encouraged to do so. No matter what way they choose to go however, the characters are on the run now, whether or not they have chosen to release the data that they have on the OSS. The mood for this portion of the adventure is motion: keep moving, keep going. Time is running out.

The main objective of Part III, Act One is to put the characters in a position for the run onto King William Island with as little early warning as possible to the members of the OSS.



RUN NOW, HIDE LATER

The first scene involves getting the players out of London. In order to get back to North America, the Players will likely have to either catch a ride with someone else or use commercial transport. Either way they have a little problem. Whatever they choose, their best chance is to run to a large population center and mix in with the teeming Billions of Terra.

But first, let's examine *why* they have a window of opportunity at all...

A Little Travelling Music if you Please

Forensic science being what it is, the players should have their DNA, what they had for lunch last week and the name of their favorite pet when they were a child plastered over every screen in Orion Space. In addition, any and every Netpilot worth their salt is going to try to find them. They are not facing some back-alley drug smuggling

operation or petty crook. They are not even facing a well-financed, well-backed criminal conspiracy. They are facing one of the most efficient and deadly espionage agencies of the 30th century. And it's about to throw the full power of the state at them in a non-life affirming way.

The one thing that the Characters have going in their favor is that Cybil Mar left a little surprise back at the Security Room (she wasn't spending all that time in the funny chair soaking in the atmosphere).

Several dataworms are spewing out terabytes of information purporting to be, well: your group. It took Cybil six months while she was undercover in the agency to compile all of the data, but the intimate details of every OSS informant and dupe she could get her hands on are residing in these dataworms. As the data from Thames Complex onsite forensic analysis is gathered, fingering the team for the raid, and then is fed into the system the data worms go crazy.

Before the first person even notices the problem, the OSS has issued emergency "hold" orders, and Confederation-level arrest warrants for 837 people and several thousand more before someone is able to actually do something about the whole mess. And that "something" is complicated further when the system, unprompted then starts to spit OSS personnel and their families into the mix. At that point, it begins sending out warrants and exposing sensitive information about OSS insiders.

IntSec, the worldwide Internal Security Network which coordinates Home Defense, is being blitzed in a hack that will go down in the history books of Terra/Sol. A glorious orgy of computer anarchy. It will be known in the fullness of time as the "Notorious Hack".

...which hides the characters for perhaps an hour.

Realistically, it should perhaps be even shorter. But by the time that the OSS eliminates all of the offending dataworms and removes them from the system. Cybil set them to go off in stages: as one is eliminated, another is triggered. By the time that someone flags the *right* information – and convinces everyone that it indeed *is* the right information – the characters should be long gone.

If they're smart.

Aw C'mon!

One thing Referees should keep in mind here: Cybil Mar has had a lot of time, nearly open access (at least to this personnel information) and a huge reservoir of resources to draw on. In fact, she does have superpowers (okay, mutant powers) but devious players, given the same opportunity could have done the same feat.

Means of Travel:

Burning for Orbit: Is a little unlikely at best. At worst it is suicidal. Cybil explains that as soon as the players appeared on the OSS vidscreen, any spaceship or shuttle that they own has either been disabled or so thoroughly blanketed with surveillance equipment that it is effectively useless for use in escape. The only exception would be to get out of the system as quickly as possible. If they have something that can move with a Thrust of 6, this might be a possibility, but for them the adventure is over. Once they are on the grid, something as well-documented as a spacegoing vessel is too easy to spot. "Best to move light, use the terrain" Cybil says, quoting almost word for word from the OSS field manual. "If you run thataway, you'll just die tired." If they insist she will wish them well. Make new characters. **[Referee Note:** while that seems harsh, keep in mind this large complex vessel has been possibly sabotaged, and even if it has not been disabled it is lit up like a Christmas tree for the best espionage agency in 100 light-years to have at. Reality check time happens even in RPGs.]

If the characters have their own (Terrestrial) Flyer, transit from London is hampered by the chaos invoked both by the OSS and the dataworms. Many of the problems that exist for a spacegoing vessel however apply to most other forms of air travel. Any vessel that the players own should be locked down, but that also goes for half of the other ships in the field. The player's ship however, may be locked down *and* booby-trapped. Still, for a determined enough crew, there is a silver lining: With the IntSec System screaming in their ear, and with all manner of annoyed travelers and a system which is obviously on the blink, the flight control personnel can probably be sweet-talked with a *Persuade (Intelligence, 0, 1-6 minutes)* or *Diplomacy/ Admin (Education, -1, 1-6 minutes)* check.

Commercial Travel has a far great chance of success than either of these choices. Ironically, the best option is to catch a scheduled flight out of London, though it is slower and more prone to being discovered once the system catches up. The simple fact of the matter is that given already dangerous congestion, London cannot afford to ground it's fleet that quickly. Incoming flights will make the situation so dangerous so quickly that it is a practical necessity. Cybil, as usual, is ahead of the game and knows this. She has already secured tickets on a transport for herself and all of the players under assumed identities. If not for the



Are you "Notorious"?

If the PCs provided Cybil with assistance (See the "Notorious" Sidebar in Part Two), on the computer project, they will have bragging rights on this history-making event. The effect number of their check will determine to what extent they can brag about it later:

Effect Bragging Rights:

-6	What hack? Never happened. Welcome to the workfarm citizen. Okay, maybe not, but when Cybil saw what you were doing she chased you away, threatening bodily harm. The characters feel burning shame every time the Notorious Hack is brought up.
-5 to -2	It really could have been better. The effect didn't work half as well as it should have. There was less time for you to escape than there otherwise should have, and you know it was your fault.
-1	You spun your wheels on it, never hurt it but you cannot really say you helped either.
0	You contributed to that Hack, a small part, but hey, it was history man.
1 to 2	You improved the data flow rate and increased the effectiveness of the hack, it gained maybe an extra fifteen minutes of downtime, but hey tying up the IntSec for even that long is an accomplishment. Brag on Impressive One!
3 to 5	You provided critical support, so that afterward there is a legal amount of doubt as to whether your team was involved at all (the hardcopy records by that time having been completely lost as OSS destroys their internal files to cover up evidence). Big Braggin' rights
6+	Players choice: either... ...you made the thing work when it otherwise would have failed utterly ("The hardware parameters for a system like IntSec were way off, but I fixed that." It was yours. ...or, the Government has <i>no</i> legal evidence <i>whatsoever</i> against the Characters following the hack (this doesn't mean the OSS doesn't know it was them, that's another matter. After a few hours the OSS "arrest and detain" order is downgraded to "hold for questioning" so the practical effect is pretty much the same for this early – and critical – period of time). You made it work good... Let their ego be your guide.

Part Three: Opening the Door

OSS search, these Identities would have been as good as their own, but by the time they land, the IDs will already be, or are just about to be, cracked. Cybil informs them that the system is still fouled with false positives. This was her best solution, it is easy, it has a lot of different possibilities and the OSS cannot do anything about it for the moment: Later? yes; Now? no. So run now, and then hide.

But we were so careful...

If the characters took great pains to conceal their identities or to set up sidetracks to waylay the OSS, the Referee should reward them. Doubtless they spent at least as much time and effort doing so (if it was just dice rolls and vague cautionary language don't bother), that this portion of the adventure is not as crucial in the overall scheme of the storytelling effort. Just because we have presented things this way should not preclude their innovations from succeeding. This and examples of player initiative should be rewarded and encouraged. The rule here is as it is with all such efforts: just have fun!

Convincing someone to take you from a smaller Independent transit concern, is probably the easiest and most effective route. Interestingly, Cybil would not have thought of it herself, as she would consider it too much of a security breach. If the players strike on this solution, let them know that it sets the supercool, ice-princess into a spin.

Of course, the transit concern owner (Ship captain, Shuttlejack Hack or what have you) might be out for their own "piece of the pie", especially once it becomes known (as it most certainly will) that the characters are wanted sentients. If the players take this route, the Referee can make this into an interesting side-adventure or an object lesson about the better side of humanity. In some cases, both.

The Sticking Point

If there is a sticking point, it would be that characters have been seriously injured in the combat scenes of Part Two and cannot continue due to their wounds. If this is the case, there are two options, based on the nature of their injuries:

Not Dead Yet: Ambulatory characters can be carted away and continue on. The Referee should try to match the players delicate condition with the transit stage of this Act and emphasize roleplaying and non-combat situations over violent clashes. This is not coddling, it is keeping things interesting.

Again, the purpose is to keep the characters in motion. If that means slower motion, with more resting and a lot more talking than fisticuffs, it is still motion. Keep things moving and don't get bogged down as a Referee. Use Cybil, who knows all manner of ways to get otherwise walking-dead people moving; use her voice to emphasize the need for alacrity. "You aren't dead yet, so get moving" is her motto. Okay, it isn't, but after a while the players will think so.

Half-Past Dead: Non-ambulatory characters, players requiring heroic measures are a little tougher in some respects and easier in others. If possible, the wounded character can be carted away in cryosleep. The only problem here is if some of the players are walking around and some (or worse yet, one) are not. Referee should keep in mind that no one wants to watch their buddies roleplay without them. As there are so many varieties of possibility here, the Referee should pay close attention to the dynamics of the table and keep an open mind. If in doubt, there is always story hour... (see the sidebar at the end of this Act)

Excess Baggage will not be tolerated

If one problem persists, either traveling with a big commercial outfit or an independent, it is making one's way through the transit grid with weapons. Carriers don't allow it (and yes, they check very well) and indies get nervous with well-heeled passengers in their holds. If Cybil Mar's advice is taken, the players will ditch their heavy weaponry, even small pistols. She tells them:

- Look, I know enough contacts to re-equip us later. Permits drag like a ball-and-chain behind you. Travel light and easy, permits are traceable and definitely not easy. Ditch 'em.

No players will want to disarm, and some will outright refuse. If this, or anything other than combat wounds (see Sidebar), causes inordinate delays; or if the players root in one spot: Simply re-use the Strike Team scene in whatever location they have clung to. Do make the encounter a serious workout quite deliberately; and hint that the OSS has far more where that came from. Staying in one spot polishing your gun should quickly be revealed as "not an option." Eventually, Cybil will bug out entirely and head off to deal with the problem herself. The OSS will still be out for the players blood after she is gone however.

LOCATION, LOCATION, LOCATION

Getting out is half the thing, getting out without being followed (either immediately or shortly thereafter) is a pleasant fairy-tale. At the conclusion of Part Two, Cybil Mar has tickets ready to go for Chicago. But players are funny creatures. They may want to blaze their own trail, and depending on the specific nature of Cybil's revelation that she was an Undercover member of the very organization they just crossed – if indeed such a conversation ever came up – might make the players wary of any more of her “assistance.”

The reason that Cybil wants to go to Chicago is that this is where she feels they can quickly and easily lose their pursuers. There are plenty of transportation possibilities in or around the city, and the location should allow them the best opportunity (other than Kansas City itself, which is entirely too hot for them at the moment) to get to King William Island in the timeframe they have (as revealed by the stolen data). She also knows Chicago well, it was her home base for some time.

This is not then to say that Chicago is the only option. In fact, there are plenty of airports and starports the players could use. Eventually, any one of them they pick is going to be tracked down, and the more remote it is, the faster the OSS will be onto their trail. Still, going to a yet more populous place (such as the Delhi Hive or one of the other high population density areas on Terra/Sol) will help them “get lost” but not necessarily allow them to utilize Cybil's contacts.

The following exchange with local authorities is thus likely to happen wherever they go as long as the population is of a certain size. The authorities are in something of a panic, the OSS has hit the panic button on the planetary emergency frequency and “turned it up to 11” in the immortal words of Nigel Tufnel.

Papers, Please

Though Cybil Mar was able to conceal the group's identities for their journey, the OSS has begun to distribute pictures and data regarding the players to local authorities throughout Terra/Sol. Again, all her effort and planning was only a short term solution, and she knew that already. This is one of the reasons she insisted on moving out quickly.

The following, written as if it were Chicago (and thus subject to modification as appropriate), should demonstrate the problem now facing the players:

Description:

Arriving in the transportation center of the city, the players will find themselves in one of the busiest locations in the urban swamp. Like all transit hubs since before the Long Pause, there are some things that can neither be avoided nor rushed. Crowds of people in Hub stations, waiting for baggage and the constant babble of distant Port announcements are ever the lot of humanity-on-the-go. Eventually, they get to where they need to be and are headed out... free...

[Make a *Recon (Intelligence, +1)* Check for everyone, even characters without the skill. Doubtless someone will make it.]

Something is wrong. The players notice the (local authorities) eyeing them suspiciously, questioning travellers. As the authorities are asking questions, showing pictures, moving through the crowd, what do you do?

Players notice a number of police looking in their direction. As the players begin moving through the Hub to the exit, they will be approached by the police.

Unless...

- ▷ Players can attempt to sneak out of the transportation center by making a *Stealth (Dexterity, -1)* skill check to avoid detection. Failure to do so by even one member of the group will mean they are apprehended by police. Using the crowds and the ample hiding places the terminal offers, this is quite within the bounds of reason. Their biggest problem will be sneaking out one of the exits, make it challenging but not impossible. Remember: move, move, move!
- ▷ If the players allow themselves to be taken, they will be escorted to the security office within the transportation center; any weapons the players are carrying are confiscated. Here, the players will talk their way out of it, or plan their escape, or wait for the arrival of OSS agents who will take them into custody (not the best plan... just sayin').
- ▷ Resisting arrest will result in more police being called and a more violent response by law enforcement personnel. Players will be more aggressively pursued if they open fire on police in a crowded building. If captured, the OSS agents arrive in less than one hour and take the players to be interrogated (and eventually killed, then used for landfill... hopefully in that order).



Talking their way out:

If players are in a position to talk their way out, they might be able to avoid any unpleasantness.

- ▷ *Who me?* This is especially true if they made any effort at all to change their appearance since the run on the OSS Thames Complex. It doesn't have to be an 'extreme facesculpt makeover' or anything particularly elaborate ("Have the auto-surgeon make me look like that York guy"), the authorities have had so many conflicting reports and other bad data they are genuinely baffled. (+1 to +3 DM depending on the quality of the disguise). This is a *Deception (Education, -1)* or *Persuade (Intelligence, 0)* check with a time interval of 10-60 seconds.
- ▷ *Knowing is half the Battle:* On that note, if the players make a *Social Science (Psychology) (Education, +0, 10-60 seconds)* or *Deception* or *Investigation (Intelligence,*

-2, 1-6 minutes) check. They will know that the station is in something of a lather over the false reports and seemingly endless rounds of security protocols coming from IntSec Central in London. They can use this information to scheme more effectively (treat the result as the first part of a Task Chain), or to prompt a second attempt at the "who me?" check (as above)

Cut to the Chase

Ultimately, the Players must avoid capture by the police if they are to flee Chicago and continue their journey to King William Island. In the spirit of the first Act, Referees should encourage a running, driving, flying chase scene; either by itself or in combination with the fight/sneak/talk checks above. If this chase scene takes a considerable amount of time, Referees may want to simplify the next stage of the Act. Too many chases in the mix and they become old and tired.

Local Law Enforcement (Average Beat Cop, 30th Century Style)

STR: 8 **DEX:** 8 **END:** 10 (+1) **INT:** 7 **EDU:** 8 **SOC:** 7

Skills: Admin 1, Advocate 1, Comms 1, Gun Combat (Pistol 2, Shotgun 1), Investigate 2, Melee (Club 1), Recon 2, Stealth 1

Equipment: Autopistol (3d6-3) and/or Shotgun (4d6) Light Armor (AV: 6), One stun grenade disguised as a Hand Commlink (they have earpiece comms for real tactical use) and a stun baton.

PATH ONE: GETTING THERE IS HALF THE FUN

Use this path if the characters decide to ignore the snippet they received from the unnamed Low Orbit Hab about the upcoming materials transfer. That snippet was useful if for no other reason than to provide a timetable, and that was all it needed to do. Beyond that, there is Path Two to dangle, but the players may not agree on such a risky proposal. Instead, they may want to take their chances and bluff their way onto King William Island.

Caveat Cursor

One problem is that they cannot use any of the modern toys for navigation. Cybil (if present) will advise them that the more gear they have that picks up geostat information also *sends* geostat information. Even if it is supposedly passive these items are dangerous, keeping them means bettering the chances for discovery by the OSS. Cybil can name any one of a number of possible espionage techniques to accomplish this as if it proves her point (the players do not have to be convinced, right up to the point where an OSS strike Team drops in their laps).

This will also require that the team tosses, disables or deactivates (at minimum) certain pieces of very common equipment: Commlinks (other than the secure one Cybil provided them earlier), Datapads and other convenience items. She will also have to short out or otherwise bypass any vehicle transponders (she's good at that though).

Are we there yet?

Players have a variety of options for reaching King William Island as they can travel by land, sea or air to reach their destination. Any form of travel requires the players acquire their own vehicle as the location is quite remote and not accessible by any commercial means. Cybil Mar can use false identification to rent a vehicle, but will leave it up to the players to best decide how they should reach the island.

Travel by road will prove the longest journey but will allow the players to avoid detection easier. Players opting to travel by sea will find the journey slightly more difficult but faster than ground travel; players must first travel to Toronto or Montreal to acquire a boat that will take them out to sea. Finally, players

will find travel by air the fastest means of the journey but has the potential to draw the most attention. Realistically, there is no point in a game with advanced technology to chart low-tech means to get from one place to another on the planet's surface. While Grav Vehicles and shuttles are commonplace, they do not lend themselves to much of a "road picture" style of play. They move too fast and there doesn't need to be a road.

While this is not the best way to approach the island itself (Cybil quickly informs them) it is a good way to close the gap so they can figure out what to do and move in (See Act Two) at their leisure. The best way to handle this part of the process is to simply ask players how much risk they take on and how long they want to take in getting there. As long as they start from "cover" in a major metropolitan area, they have a pretty good chance in the short term to avoid notice in the lightly populated northern reaches of the Republic of Chicago.

Individual Referees of course are free to complicate matters themselves as they wish. The OSS looking for them, and every surveillance camera and every cop is potentially going to lead the players into trouble. The only suggestion here is that such encounters should always include a way out, remember: as the Referee, you *want* to get them to King William Island.

THE NEXT STEP: PREPARATION IS KEY

Players will want to prepare for their journey before departing and ensure they have the proper supplies and equipment. This does not mean a shopping spree. Referees can choose to have the players encounter another police patrol or even OSS agents if they take too long before leaving for their trip. Once they get out of immediate danger for a search, their options improve enormously. Especially with Cybil's contacts in North America, which are if anything even better than her contacts in London. This time, Cybil pays the bills for player equipment (their assets are currently frozen), but she only has a budget of approximately 25,000cr each in cash she can readily access. [Referees can allow certain special purchases as well if they want or have her raid a cache of goods she has in Chicago (her former case of operations).]

Players may also want to think about changing their appearances somewhat. Perhaps not as elaborately as with a Holonet or a Fauxmask, but there are six

Part Three: Opening the Door

days to kill: more than enough time to heal up from a facesculpt. If the players don't think of this, Cybil will let them know. If they point out that Cybil hasn't altered her own appearance she will simply say: "Not yet. I will when the time is right."

Depending on how they left Chicago (if that is where they landed), players may also encounter local authorities or pursuing OSS agents during their trip. If the OSS is tipped off as to the players' destination, they will ensure that defenses at the base are increased in preparation for the group's arrival.

PATH TWO: RENDEZVOUS IN ORBIT

Referee Note: *this scene can be adapted in a number of ways. It is written to assume that the players are not willing to take the initiative in planning an assault on the Island. If that assumption is incorrect, Referees may need to adjust some of the descriptions to account for increased player involvement and be willing to ad-lib in some areas.*

If is also important to note that this is, in essence, a side-adventure. The motto of Act One (move, move, move) is no longer a consideration.

The Set Up:

According to the email they were able to access, the Precursor Project is waiting for a critical component to arrive from an orbital Hab station before they engage in "the Operation". This will be enough to give Cybil Mar an idea: to head off that shipment and either smuggle the players onboard or take their places using disguises that she provides them (in reality, she plans for the team to take the Hab Crew's places but at least initially will suggest that a less invasive option is possible).

According to the OSS system, the "Scrap" communication that they Players intercepted was as-yet unread by the Director. That means he is unaware of the contents of the file which clarify that the time for pickup of the goods from their low Orbit Hab is based on local time for King William Island, not the local time for London. This creates a six-hour window of opportunity.

Cybil wants to send a terse response acknowledging the correction. She knows that this has to be done quickly. That is to prevent the Orbital Operation from re-sending the

information, which she does not want the Director to see. Also included in said communication is an updated Security code, saying as well that they will have to re-task another shuttle to that location. This will make things easier later. Cybil informs the players

- ▶ "The best part is that this works because the OSS is paranoid. They got the folks in that tin can on communication restriction.
- ▶ That means if we can move in time there will be no other messages. This is the opening."

Puttin' the plan together(-ish)

Likely, there are three more things they need to do, and if the players appear to be faltering at this point, help them find their way by Cybil putting forward her plan. **Referee Note:** Again, this assumes a *less* proactive group, Referee's should only insert themselves here if they must to preserve some sense of the players' autonomy.]

- ▷ Figure out where the Low Orbit Hab is located. This is a technical detail she either delegates to a player or performs herself.
- ▷ Get the Equipment they need, preferably from some of her unsavory contacts in Chicago. This is the shopping fun part of Part III.
- ▷ Lastly, the players and Cybil will have to 'relieve' someone of their shuttlecraft. She does not have enough cash on hand to buy one or even rent one. Likewise it would be unwise for the Players to use one of their own, as these vessels are being sought after by every OSS agent in the system and using it would tip-off every agent for hundreds of kilometers around.

Putting the Toys in Order:

Next Cybil Mar will introduce the players to some of her friends in the "Equipment Provision" arena. These are essentially the same lot of character covered in Path One, but the kind of Equipment that the characters will need will be quite different. Now they are looking for toys like Vacc Suits and snub guns.

Something else they will need, and one of the reasons Cybil is glad they are back in North America, is some disguise technology. There are two basic disguise technologies used in 30th century espionage that did not exist in the Long Pause: Holonets and Fauxmasks. These are of course in addition to the "old fashioned" approach. (See *Player Insert Handouts* covering both of these technologies) One of the masters of disguise technology, a mysterious Uplift named Ramón, lives near Chicago and Cybil is on excellent

terms with him. As having the ability to disguise themselves to look exactly like the Hab Agents headed back down to Terra is a critical part of the mission, Cybil handles all of the necessary transactions (cost etc.) herself.

Referee Note: The Referee, as Ramón, will guide the characters through the process of deciding which technology to utilize. Ultimately, the players are the ones who will make the choice of tech based on what they think best. Note also that there is no “right” answer, each of these forms have their benefits and drawbacks. [The species of Uplift Ramón belongs to was deliberately left undefined. Determination is left up to the Referee based on what they would be most comfortable roleplaying. Don’t be afraid to chew a bit o’ scenery, the adventure will get heavier later on.]

Thar be Thievery Afoot

Theft of a spaceship is a difficult thing, even the theft of smaller craft. The problem is that the authorities are looking for people (well, the player characters) trying to do *just what they are about to do*. This means that what is normally a dicey proposition just got much harder. Either way, they do have a few days to wait it out, as the Hab will not be ready for the transfer until six days (well, 5 days and 18 hours) after the Players made their escape from London. They have time to plan and orchestrate something fantastic. Allow them to.

Cybil doesn’t have the ready funds to buy or rent (which is pretty much the same as providing the funds to buy) a shuttlecraft. She does however have the money to consign a cargo. If they need to, they can then hijack the vessel. That will lead to a lot of unnecessary bloodshed. It’s also a relatively low thing to do, but it is an option she will present. Referees may want to point out to their players that Cybil seems to take the more violent of two options when she can. From that point on, they are considered forewarned.

Likely, the players will simply have to bite the slug-thrower projectile and try to steal a small spacecraft. Once they procure it, Cybil (or one of the players who has the right skills) will be able to bypass the transponder to either send out a false signal or send out none at all. If a false signal, the codes they use would have to be able to stand up to scrutiny; they can purchase codes from Cybil’s contacts, but there is no saying what quality that they will get for a rush job. If they rig their transponder to send no signal at all, the craft could attract trouble from customs and/or Orbital Law Enforcement.

Either way, the players will need to make an Orbit Monitoring Check. The skill is *Pilot/Small Craft (Intelligence, 0)* or *Astrogration (Education, -1)*. This assumes they are trying to cut an orbit that avoids entanglements with the law. The one thing they have going for them is that the law is certain that if they do get ships to leave the planet, they will do so, not go into low orbit. In fact, the authorities are paying far more attention to the upper orbit, where densitometers and similar equipment don’t have to deal with the “noise” of low orbit trash and the like.

- ▷ *Sans code:* make two rolls, one going up and another coming back down. Both have a -1 DM.
- ▷ *If using a purchased code:* the DM for their roll is determined immediately prior to the Orbital check: d6:
1-2: -3 DM; **3-4:** +2 DM; **5-6:** +4 DM

Habjacked!

Once the players are in low orbit, they are able to rendezvous with the OSS Low Orbit Hab DSX-2291 for the “delivery” they needed to make. Doubtless there will be mayhem and destruction, but players may want to bear in mind that an OSS team is headed to the Hab in six hours for the real pickup, and that any major damage inflicted will be obvious. Stress that they have the advantage, they have the security codes and they have the jump on the Hab’s occupants simply because they know there will be a fight.

While there are a wide variety of very smart means to “circumvent” problems on the Hab, Cybil herself will not mention them. This is somewhere that the players will have to either step in to make non-lethal suggestions. Cybil is in revenge mode, dead men don’t signal home base and all that.

By the Prickling of my Thumbs

It hardly needs to be said that a list of options includes:

- ▷ Gas which the players have filters for, the use of decompression (explosive if you want to go fatal, otherwise slowly reducing O² levels until they are knocked out) at a critical moment when the players are secure
- ▷ The use of some kind of poison “Hey Fastov’s a Russian name; Bread and salt are the traditions for welcoming your relief right? Well c’mon comrade, you get the bread, I’ll get some hard liquor in squeezebulbs and be right back...”

And these are just samples. Cybil’s methods aren’t always the best. Reward cunning, it makes nasty things grow.

Part Three: Opening the Door

Without violence erupting, the transfer should go something like this [Referees should stop any time that the PCs want to make their move, this is how it would go with a legitimate transfer]:

Description:

The Shuttle draws into the orbital path they calculated at almost the same time they pick up something on the densitometer. Hab DSX-2291 has running lights only, which should indicate that it is an unmanned Robot factory of some sort. But as they close in on the Hab, interior shutters over the windows open up, showing that there are indeed people on board.

The Hab itself is small, an example of minimalist manufacture in microgravity. There are probably less than ten onboard. As the shuttle nears, the comm-system flashes.

"Welcome up Agent Quinn," A female voice says, 'your security code checks out. We are deactivating the defense grid and guiding you in remotely. [Referee Note: Agent Quinn was the contact name that Cybil provided to the agent onboard the Hab.]

From that point forward, all they have to do is sit back, listen to the *Blue Danube* on the speakers and watch the pretty dance of two man made objects docking in microgravity. Of course, at this point they can also do things like use any sensor equipment they have that can pick up life signs (NAS units et al). If they have such gear, Cybil will remind them if she has to. They also will get a "read" on the Hab's interior layout from the normal scans their vessel is able to perform normally. **[Referee Note:** In game terms, this means that the players can be presented with a map of the Hab. They also will be slightly shocked to discover that the Hab is in Zero-Gravity. There are no GravPlates detected in the Habitat at all.]

Once the airlock is secured, the hatch opens, and the slightly fresher air of the shuttlecraft is mixed with the dank air of the habitat. The Hab crew smiles as they catch a little cleaner air then they are used to.

Just outside of the hab airlock are six beings, two women and four men. The men are all wearing coveralls that are still commonplace in microgravity, the women are wearing clothing that is still utilitarian, but not designed exclusively for space.

One of the women has a laser pistol in a holster at her left shoulder, the other is unarmed and carrying a datapad.

"I'm Fastov. This is Dr. Sam Chase," the armed woman says, indicating the woman next to her. "She's going to be part of the team headed back down with us. We did final calculations this morning and should only need the two of us."

From there, Fastov introduces them to the rest of the team one by one and expects the same in return. Following this ritual, the men begin to load canisters into the shuttlecraft one by one until everything is completed and then they start to prep the shuttle for it's return to Terra's surface.

When the Hab starts Rockin'

Somewhere around "I'm Fastov", combat will doubtless erupt. When it does, the Agent is very careful about not hitting one of the canisters to be loaded. If the PCs shoot one deliberately, either make it a glancing blow or roll new characters.

Any player who made the check of their sensors on the shuttle, *Sensors (Intelligence or Education, 0)*, will be aware that there are two more people on board the Hab. They are just workers, the Referee should place them wherever they think best.

If the players manage to capture or kill the Hab crew, they can scan their faces and use disguise technology to duplicate them for the next stage. Any survivors will try to communicate to the outside world, but Fastov is the only one who has the command override codes to accomplish that task.

The next stage involves getting rid of the shuttlecraft and duplicating the Hab crew as best they can. Cybil will retreat into the Hab's Primary Operations Module with the body of Agent Fastov (dead or not) and informs the team as she leaves:

- ▶ "Do the best you can to tidy up and duplicate them. Keep an eye on the time. Don't disturb me for the next four hours."

She refuses to say much more, but she has a solemn look on her face. She returns from the Primary Operations Module as a complete (as in perfect to every detail) copy of Agent Fastov... who was a much larger individual. One of the first things she says when she returns, in a perfectly modulated voice that sounds *exactly* like Fastov's:

- ▶ Don't worry about the Hab crew. Fastov was supposed to murder them up here once the relief crew arrived and the cargo was loaded. I'll just tell them that I had to move up that timetable. They'll commend my initiative.

As before, Cybil will not answer any questions, and she will inform the team that the body of Agent Fastov is hidden.

[Referee's Note: not where however, snoopy players will find it in an electronic closet in the Primary Operations Control Room. The entire head is missing and looks like Cybil burned it off with welding tools from Primary Ops.]

Anyone who enters the Primary Operations Cabin will see that there was a lot of blood spilled there. In microgravity no less. While it was wiped up as best as she could, the blood still went everywhere and some of it is still floating around. This gives the cabin an abattoir stench. If pressed (hard), Cybil will simply tell the Team that she is a mutant with some unusual abilities that include shapeshifting.

- "Anything more than that, you don't want to know. It isn't mission critical information, that much I can tell you."

Referee Note: From there onward, Cybil will know the proper codes for the ship coming from King William Island, as well as a wealth of data about the individuals that the Players are duplicating. This will give them some help in their mimicry (+1 DM to any *Disguise* or *Deception* check) as "that person". While this should only apply to those who know the individual, think of it as providing a placebo effect that helps the players establish some verve in their performance (style counts for something after all).

SO WHAT EXACTLY WAS GOING ON?

Once they have taken control of the Hab, the Players can do a little poking and prodding on their own to determine what the devil was so important up here. There is a great deal of sophisticated chemical manufacturing equipment in the Hab. Any players with *Physical Science (Chemistry)* will know right away that it is used to grow crystals. Beyond this, it depends on what mixture of various types of elements are used that determine specifically what is in the canisters. The canisters themselves are now sealed and require a command code to open (which Cybil does have after her trip to Primary Ops). When she returns, Cybil explains it this way:

- "The Operations they are gearing up for involves the introduction of some sort of complex compound to the atmosphere, I'm not sure exactly what Director Adams plans on doing with them, but they need the kind of crystals that can only be developed in Zero Gravity in order to pull this off."
- "That's why this Hab has no artificial gravity, the instant that these crystals are exposed

The Habitat Crew

Agent Fastov

STR: 8 **DEX:** 12 (+2) **END:** 9 (+1) **INT:** 10 (+1)
EDU: 9 (+1) **SOC:** 8

Skills: Comms 2, Deception 3, Diplomacy 1, Explosives 2, Gun Combat (Energy Pistol 3), Physical Science (Chemistry) 2, Recon 2, Sensors 3, Zero-G 2

Equipment: Laser Pistol (3d6+3), Cloth Armor (Av:5)

Porters

STR: 12 (+2) **DEX:** 6 **END:** 10 (+1) **INT:** 7
EDU: 7 **SOC:** 6

Skills: Athletics (Coordination) 2, Gun Combat 0, Melee (Unarmed 1, Club 2), Trade (Cargo Handling) 3, Vacc-suit 1, Zero-G 3

Equipment: A Thruster Stick, which has a thruster unit on one end for maneuvering. These can cause nasty burns on contact (2d6) or be used as a powered spear (one 3d6 attack that will cause those individual struck to pinwheel).

Habitat Worker

STR: 8 **DEX:** 9 (+1) **END:** 6 **INT:** 7 **EDU:** 8 **SOC:** 5

Skills: Athletics (Coordination) 2, Sensors 1, Vacc-Suit 1, Trade (Zero-G Manufacturing) 2

Equipment: None of consequence.

Sam Chase is not a combatant, she mostly just clutches to Fastov and screams. If needed, use the Base Scientist statistics on pg. 101

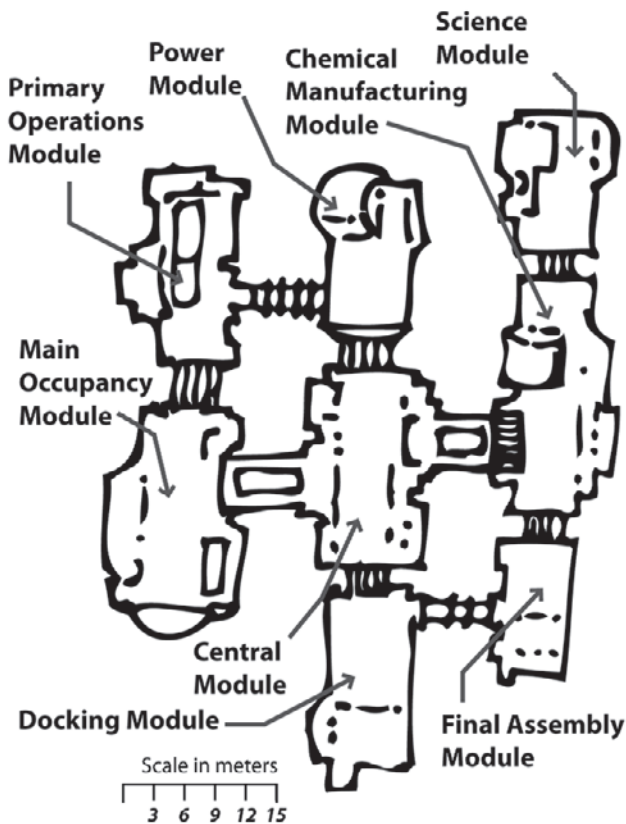
to any more gravity than you have here, they begin to break down, making the stuff worthless. By the way, it's also explosive in it's present state it will go up with a huge bang."

- "Fastov wasn't sure exactly what the plan was any more than we are now. She isn't even sure if this stuff is mission critical or just an optimizer. But we know more than we did before, and we are in good position."
- "One thing is certain: If we sabotage these crystals, Adams and his cronies will be sure to know it. That is the first thing they are going to check when they get this stuff down there."

Doubtless, the Players will want to use the canisters to hide their weapons and any other gear they are taking down with them. There will also doubtless be the old standby of booby trapping the whole mess. If so, that's great: it shows initiative!

Cybil seems oddly preoccupied and doesn't mention the obvious to them.

Low Orbit Habitat DSX-2291



The Habitat

As with so many others of the same type, Low Earth Hab DSX-2291 is little more than a series of tubes connected by all-too thin metal. It hangs in orbit over Terra, dancing across the skin of the planet. Most of the Low Orbit Habs are unmanned, and most do not have the fusion power core in the reactor of this one. Of course, they generally do not have weaponry or chemical weapons platforms either.

Mapping the sections is something of a waste. The modules are basically all concentric circles when viewed from above, and much of the machinery, the cargo space and the workspaces are built into the sides of the modules along the inner edge. Still, a brief description of the modules themselves is in order:

Primary Operations Module (7m x 18m): This is the “command Center” of the Habitat, the closest thing that they have to a bridge. While the Habitat doesn’t move as such, it does need to have telemetry data for communications uplinks and there are thrusters to maintain the orbit. This also houses the communications center and the main computer system for the Habitat (not an AI, per the OSS’s feelings on the matter). This module is connected to Main Occupancy and Power Modules.

Main Occupancy Module (12m x 21m): The Main Occupancy Module is where the Hab crew spends most of their time, even on work cycles. The Module has a sleeping bag arrangement (a classic of “zero-g living” since the Long Pause) and the “galley” if it could be so-named. There is also a crew personal, modified to allow for the microgravity conditions.

Power Module (9m x 12m): Somewhat misnamed, the Power Module not only houses the power system (normally batteries or solar panels but a compact fusion reactor here), but secondary life support and electrical as well. It has direct umbilicals to the Primary Operations and Central Modules.

Central Module (10-12m x 18m): The Central Module isn’t the heart of the ship as much as it is the transportation nexus, the place that most people have to go through to get from one module to the next several times each day. This is also where the primary life support is found. The fans blow here constantly. Connected to Power, Habitat, Docking and Chemical Manufacturing Modules..

Docking Module (9m x 16m): This is the Cargo area as well as the first place anyone enters the ship from if they have come from another vessel. It is the most open of all of the modules, moreso even than the Central Module. When the players arrive, it is full of canisters on palettes that have been belted to the sides.

Science Module (7m x 13m): a fully-functional laboratory is here, containing a well-stocked larder of chemical compounds (bomb makers take note!). The Hab’s Chief Scientist, Samantha Chase and Agent Fastov also slept here rather than with the rest of the crew. Connected directly only to the Chemical Manufacturing module.

Chemical Manufacturing Module (10m x 22m): This is where the crystals were grown in solutions perfected and maintained in the Science Module. Most of the actual work done in the Chemical Manufacturing Module is either automatic (growing crystals) or done by the drones. This module is connected to the Central, Science and Final Assembly modules.

Final Assembly Module (6m x 13m): This is where the crystals were packed for transit as well as the assembly of the cases and other machine-shop style necessities. There are spare parts galore here if more cases are to be made or if something needs to be constructed. There are also several drones in the Module who have been modified to perform most of the machinshop functions with built-in tools. Connected to Docking and Chem Manufacturing.

STORY HOUR

As the situation from a preparation standard is so fluid, and there are such a wide variety of possibilities based on how the characters performed in the previous portion of the Campaign, there is a certain likelihood that **none** of the material presented in Act One is applicable to a given group.

The ultimate solution in such a case is to fade to black and open up play in a staging area not far from King William Island. After the Escape scene from the OSS facility in Part Two (or wherever the snag develops), the group ran into transportation problems and was forced to split up, either in singles or small groups. They arranged to meet at the location where they are starting, and are recounting their travels.

Have the players each then describe how their characters were able to escape and make their way to that location. Turn the mechanics on their head: have the quality of the explanations determine

- (a) how much damage they healed in the time since and/or
- (b) what sort of equipment they have managed to acquire

The key is to press the players, make them work for it, provide an engaging tale. The more novel and/or daring, the better the results in the above categories. The technique works best when the Referee becomes an active participant in the discussion, doling out rewards as they related their tale. It might be a good idea to use chits of some sort as markers of regained health. The following is just an example

- **[Referee as Cybil]** "Okay what happened after we split up at the Transit Hub."
- **[Victim Player 1/Jason]** "Uh. I ran."
- **[Referee rolls his eyes, he has a poker chip in his hands but doesn't extend it to Jason]**
- **[Referee as Cybil]** "Obviously. And what happened when the cops chased you outside? They were right on your heels when I last saw you."
- **[Jason]** "They did? They were" [Finally the light comes on] "Oh yeah, I ran through the Parking area... (he glances at his skills) and I lost them by hiding under a vehicle once I'd gotten far enough ahead."
- **[Referee as Cybil]** "Okay, how did you get out the Parking Garage then?"
- **[Jason]** "I managed to bypass the security system of one of the Aircars and shorted out the transponder so they couldn't track it."
- **[Referee tosses one poker chip Player 1/Jason]**
- **[Referee as Referee]** "Okay, start thinking about anything else you did of note on the way from Chicago here. Whose next?"
- **[Player 2/Dave]** "I made my way into the baggage area, let the three who were on my tail at that moment get good and lost inside. Then I used one of the baggage carousels to get out into the concourse area and slipped out the side exit while a bunch of them who had been stationed there were chasing after Jason."
- **[Referee hands three poker chips to Dave]**
- **[Referee as Referee to Dave]** "Excellent. So when you were in the baggage area you must picked up that Grav Belt right? Like Jason, think about anything interesting on the trip back. I'll come back to you again for that. Who's next?"

This technique should not be overdone, and it does not work with all scenes. But given that the point of the First Act of this Part is to engage the characters, to get them moving, this could be as good or better than a long series of dice rolls and cautious pre-planning. Some players do better at this sort of thing in advance, so if you plan to try this out, you might want to give them a slight head's up.

KING WILLIAM ISLAND

King William Island is an inhospitable place covered in snow much of the year. Players traveling across its surface on foot will need appropriate survival gear or risk exposure to extreme cold [**Referee Note:** Those exposed with gear not developed for long-term cold use suffer 1d6 damage per hour if they fail an *Endurance* check]. As inhospitable as it is, the Island was going to be the home of the Terror Bay Arcology

at one time, a structure on the Southwestern coast. The arcology was well into final construction, and even had the families of the crews living there, when Dukette mounted his expedition. These individuals were forced out when Dukette's dig uncovered the Precursor Site. Now Terror Bay stands abandoned, a testament to "official secrets." And the power of the OSS to shut down a major project of that sort when it was nearly finished on a very overcrowded world.

While reaching King William Island may prove difficult, actually getting onto the island is far more challenging. The island itself is not accessible by land (there was a single bridge spanning the Rae Strait at one time, it was discarded, but a check-point remains of the island side of the bridge).

The entire island is covered by an advanced radar system that can spot incoming sea and air vehicles. Such vehicles are contacted by OSS personnel

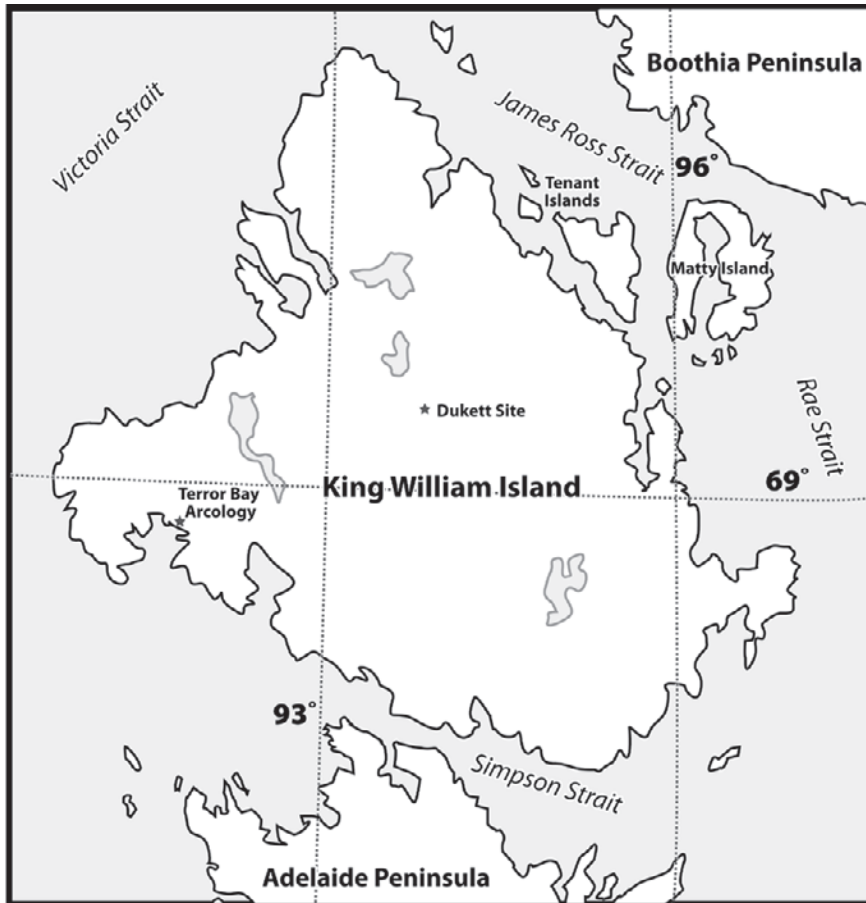
from the base and asked for identification. Most often, vehicles not authorized to be on the island are asked to turn back before defensive measures are put into place. The time around the buildup for this "big operation" is not "most often" and they will likely challenge with force.

The Island is more than adequately defended:

- ▷ OSS aircraft, sea craft and defense systems are quickly called into action against unauthorized vehicles.
- ▷ The entire island is littered with anti-aircraft weapon systems such as missiles and gun emplacements; these fire on any unauthorized vehicles.
- ▷ OSS air and sea vehicles are immediately dispatched against unauthorized intruders. These vehicles and weapon systems shoot to kill, as do any patrols on the island.
- ▷ The island is also patrolled by probe drones that search for unwelcome intruders. If the players are spotted by these drones, combat drones (Hellbots with PGMPs) are dispatched to eliminate them

The OSS base itself is located approximately 50 kilometers inland in the center of the island.

While intended for the Referee, there is little here Cybil cannot tell the players so this may be used as a handout



Dukett Site Proposal, 2944



PART III, ACT TWO&THREE: ISLAND SIEGE

Having reached the remote King William Island, the players now attempt to infiltrate the OSS base. This is where they will strive to uncover the secrets of the OSS, and expose their villainy for the world to see.

Using these Encounters

The players have managed to reach King William Island and locate the OSS base hidden amongst the snow and rocks. Here, they intend to discover what the OSS has been doing to children adopted from orphanages in London as well as search for evidence of the OSS's involvement with the alien ruins discovered on the island over forty years ago.

With the players is Cybil Mar, who has provided help and information in seeking out the truth behind the insidious OSS. Cybil's assistance at the base will be vital, as she admits to having visited the facility some years ago and can relate some of the layout of the place to them. With her help, the players will be able to infiltrate the base far easier and Cybil herself may be able to learn more about her own mysterious past.

At this point, the players are "in charge" and the Referee is going to be reacting to their directions rather than the reverse. This is a good thing. Use the descriptions and the details about the locations below to facilitate their actions.

The Path less Travelled...

If the players took the "Path Two" Option shown at the end of Part III Act One, they will be able to circumvent a lot of the checks that go on here for someone trying to penetrate the defenses using other skills. Cut directly to "Special Delivery" and then recount the strangeness as the base begins final preparation for the "Big Operation". The rest of the material presumes that the players have **not** cut things quite so close and are coming to the Island a day (or more) in advance of the day of the "big operation".



THE BASE

The OSS facility is located in an isolated area of snow and rocks in the center of the island. The area directly surrounding the base has been cleared of trees and other cover, giving the base a 100 meter radius of clearing in every direction. Fifty meters from the base itself is a large, 3 meter tall concrete wall. Only a single gate is used to access the facility from the ground and this gate is made of heavy steel and guarded by a team of OSS guards at all times.

The area between the wall and the base is always lit by powerful flood lights, making it nearly impossible to sneak across to the base. This area is always under constant observation by probe drones that immediately dispatch combat drones at the first sign of an intruder. A large landing pad for aircraft can be found between the base and the wall on the north side of the complex; nearby is a large garage used to store vehicles and keep them out of the heavy winds. A single paved road leads from the gate to this garage. In the garage is a large ground vehicle used to transport heavy equipment and a small aircraft.

The base itself is a completely self-contained facility ensuring the staff is sheltered from the harsh cold of the island and their operations cannot be viewed from the outside. There

are three main entrances to the base from the outside; one large entrance located on the north side of the facility across from the landing pad/garage and two smaller entrances on the west and east sides of the base. The large entrance always has a single guard on duty.

Inside the base, there are two main levels and a sub-level where the alien ruins are located. Travel between these levels is done via a number of stairwells as well as a central elevator. The first floor, located at ground level, contains the dormitories for the staff, a nursery, mess hall, storage rooms and offices. The second floor, located just below the first, is comprised of laboratories, maintenance workshops, the security office with a small brig, an armory with an attached firing range, a medical facility and utility rooms.

Moving through the two main levels of the base does not require any special access and nearly every area is accessible to the entire staff. The labs and the armory are off limits except to authorized personnel and access to these areas requires an access card from someone with that authorization. Almost every square meter of the base is carefully monitored from the security office and cameras can be found throughout the entire facility. A patrol of four guards is on duty here at all times, with one constantly monitoring the security feeds from the base.

The base houses over seventy full-time staff and a handful of visitors at any given time. Not included in this total are children that have been sent to the base for the various programs the OSS is engaged in at the facility. While most of the staff is laboratory technicians, maintenance staff and other non-combatants, nearly a dozen guards are present within the base at all times as well as an equal number of OSS agents.

Cybil Mar remembers a great deal of the layout of the base and can provide players with a general idea of the key locations within the facility.

BREAKING IN

The most challenging task for the players will be getting into the base itself. Reaching the base requires players to get over the three meter wall and then make their way to the facility while avoiding the probe drones patrolling the area; doing so requires an *Athletics: Coordination (Dexterity, +0)* skill check to climb the wall and a *Stealth (Dexterity, -4)* skill check to avoid detection by one of the probe drones.

Once at the base, players must gain entry. The doors leading into the base are always locked, requiring a valid card key to gain entry. Players attempting to break in must make a **Physical Intrusion** (-4) skill check. Players may also attempt to locate a ventilation shaft, requiring a *Recon (Intelligence, +0)* skill check; entering one of these small shafts calls for a **Physical Intrusion** (-1) skill check. The ventilation shafts have pressure sensors located throughout them and will trigger an alarm if anyone or anything crawls through them.

Players may also attempt to pose as visiting OSS agents (outside of the Special Delivery scenario described below). While the players are currently being hunted by the OSS, the security forces at the base will not immediately recognize the players or Cybil Mar. Cybil's security clearance has been deactivated following her aid in the break-in of the OSS facility in London, however she still carries credentials that may be able to help her and the players infiltrate the base. Using her significant powers of deception, Cybil can arrange for the players to reach the base unhindered. Guards at the main gate and the main entrance will allow Cybil and the players access to the facility. Players taking this option however will have only a few minutes before their entry into the facility is checked by security and their true identities are discovered.

A "Physical Intrusion" Skill Check?

Referees are encouraged to determine on their own what skills will allow them to bypass the barriers, locks and other hurdles found in the King William Island Complex.

There are a variety of skills that touch on bypassing security measures in the **Traveller Main Rulebook**, if not outright then at least by implication:

Engineering (Electronics) for magnetic locks and high tech systems. Used in examples for bypassing locks, but locks are not mentioned in skill description (giving hope for some of the others).

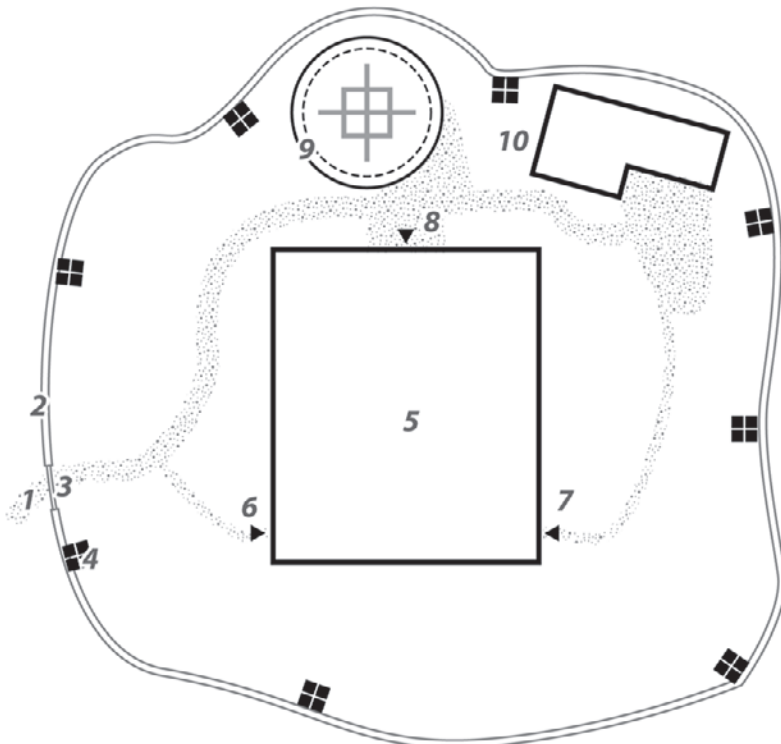
Mechanic as a general repair and maintenance skill would not only work for more traditional locks, but because it is designed to be a general application skill it also should include how to take apart (and thus bypass) systems that are not working or in this case that you do not want to work.

Deception skill does not specifically mention lockpicking skills at all, but it does mention the use of slight of hand techniques which would be critical for this application. Plus, as the general skill for skullduggery, it seems to be a natural approach.

Of course any single one of these might be rejected out of hand among some roleplaying groups. Individual Referees or other Traveller-related resources have also developed their own approach or house rule. Here at Terra/Sol games, we encourage the use of multiple approaches to task resolutions. When it comes to this area however, the use of different skills should have different impacts. A general modifier is used as the Referee deems appropriate. In some cases it might be increased or decreased depending on the actual skill in use. Some suggestions using the three skills listed above:

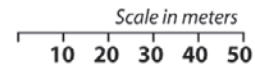
- ▷ Mechanics involve taking the device or barrier apart at least to some degree. These checks should not have a time less than 10-60 seconds and may well be in the 1-6 minute range even for "simple" electronic locks.
- ▷ Electronics skill involves the use of specialized tools. If the character does not have these tools, they will be at a decided disadvantage either in terms of skill or in terms of time (as they try to cobble together makeshift tools).
- ▷ Deception should only be useful for certain kinds of locks, not those of the most hi-tech kind, and usually locks that would be "commonplace" rather than specialized. The advantage of using this skill is that it tends to be fast and simple, emphasizing few tools that tend to be makeshift.

King William Island Complex



Key:

- 1 Paved Road
- 2 3m Wall
- 3 Front Gate
- 4 Flood Light poles
- 5 Complex
- 6 Western Entrance
- 7 Eastern Entrance
- 8 Main Entrance
- 9 Landing Pad
- 10 Garage



Referees are free to make entry into the facility as challenging or as easy as they like, using Cybil as a means to help the players. It should be clear that, once in the base, the players have only a limited amount of time before they are discovered. They should work quickly to begin searching for the information they need to bring the vile operations of the OSS to light.

SPECIAL DELIVERY

If the Players went along with Cybil's Plan to hijack the shipment headed from the Low earth Habitat to King William Island (see **Scrap** sidebar, Part Two, Act III and **Path Two**, Part Three Act II), the players are able to bypass all of this and are taken directly to the Island and in fact are welcomed inside.

Once inside, the Players are assigned space in the Dorms, the Complex is abuzz with action as the Operation is to begin soon. Director Adams has not yet "addressed the troops" but he will, and the Complex Personnel are practically on the edge of their seats in anticipation.

This gives the Players a chance to sneak around in plain sight. A few people will ask them who they are, but most know that they came down in the Shuttle and brought critical components. Many will ask for some specifics, which the players might utilize to make the OSS Personnel more talkative about their own role in the base...

FINDING THE TRUTH

A great deal of information can be gleaned by players while in the OSS facility.

Labs:

If the players are able to reach the laboratories on the second level they can find a wealth of data. Some labs (Area 13A-F on Level Two) are dedicated to specific projects, while a larger space (Area 15 on Level Two) is designated as a "General Lab Area" and a separate room attached to the Infirmary (Area 24 on Level Two) is a specialized for use as a Medical Lab.

The Team can search the labs by making a *Recon (Intelligence, -1)* or an *Investigate (Intelligence, -1)* skill check to locate evidence that the OSS has engineered a strange virus. Players searching the General labs will also find materials relating to the study of the alien virus (identified as *E. Ex. Goblinus* by Dukette).

Players are able to find samples of both viruses as well as reference materials regarding each, however all samples of the viruses are kept in locked containers, requiring card key access from someone authorized to examine the devices

Referee Note: Information regarding what the OSS is doing with these viruses cannot be found in the labs on this level, players do find references to the 'Project Precursor' labs located on level three.

The Workshop

Players can make a similar search in the workshops found on level two (Area 2, Level Two). Here, alien technology has been brought up from level three to be analyzed and reverse-engineered by OSS scientists. All samples of alien technology are kept in locked containers, requiring card key access from someone authorized to examine the devices. Reference material can be gained by players searching the area (requiring the same skill checks as above) hinting at the nature of the alien technology, but analyzing this information will take some time and key pieces have been intentionally left out, referring instead to the studies being done by the Precursor Project on level three.

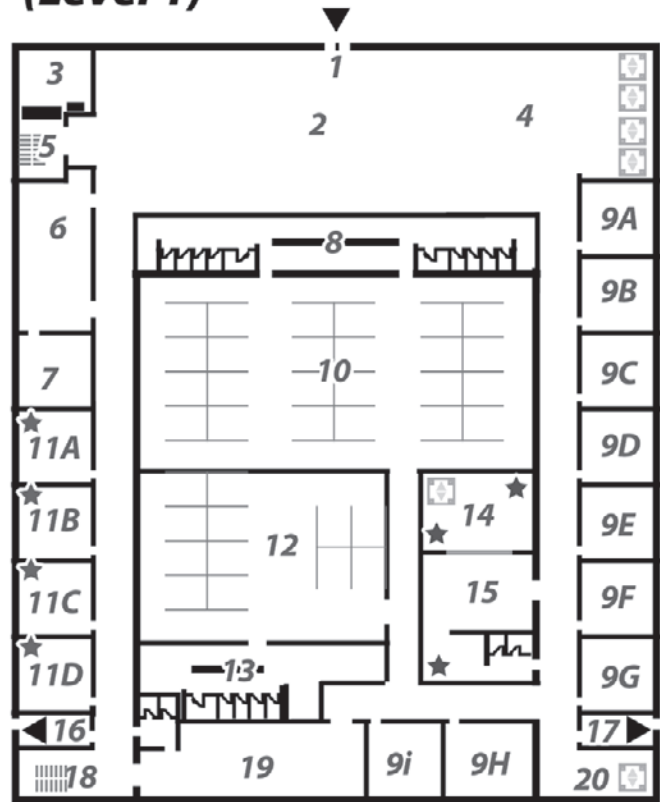
Other:

If the players choose to investigate the nursery (Areas 15, Level One), they are able to discover a number of children 'adopted' by OSS fronts and sent to the island. In a scene reminiscent of the tunnels below the geisha house in Kansas City, the players find the children in cribs tagged with numbers and data of each child held within.

Cybil will relate, or anyone can see, that there is an Observation Room (Area 14) "hidden" behind a large visiwindow. Access is directly from the leel above, although going through the visiwindow is easy. Players can search the area with a *Recon (Intelligence, 0)* or an *Investigate (Intelligence, +1)* skill check for data that points to the OSS experimenting on the children using technology found in the alien ruins as well as the viruses found in the laboratories on level two. Much of the information regarding these experiments is missing and instead refers to files found at the Precursor Project on level three.

Should the players find a computer terminal anywhere throughout the complex (these are marked with a star), they can attempt to use it to access the facility's records. Doing so requires a *Computers (Intelligence, -6)* skill check; the computers of the facility are the most advanced the players will have ever seen and use top-of-the-line software such as a rating 3 Security suite. If the players manage to gain access to the computers, they can find nearly all of the information mentioned above, however specific data regarding Project Precursor is kept on a secure and isolated system located on level three. Players with access to the base's computer systems can also attempt to create a new access code the players can use to gain access to all areas of the base; players

King William Isle Site (Level 1)



Key:

- | | |
|---------------------|------------------------|
| 1 Public Entrance | 11 Offices |
| 2 Mess/commons | 12 Women's Dorms |
| 3 Utility Room (HV) | 13 Women's Personals |
| 4 Elevator Bank | 14 Observation Chamber |
| 5 Stairs | 15 Nursery B |
| 6 Kitchen | 16 Western Entryway |
| 7 Pantry | 17 Eastern Entryway |
| 8 Mens Personals | 18 Stairwell |
| 9 Private Suites | 19 Rec Area |
| 10 Men's Dorms | 20 Storage Area |

King William Complex Staff

STR: 6 **DEX:** 6 **END:** 7 **INT:** 9 (+1) **EDU:** 10 (+1) **SOC:** 7

Skills: Admin 1, Computers 1, Gun Combat 0, Melee 0, Recon 1, Job Specialty: 3

Equipment: A toolkit related to their job

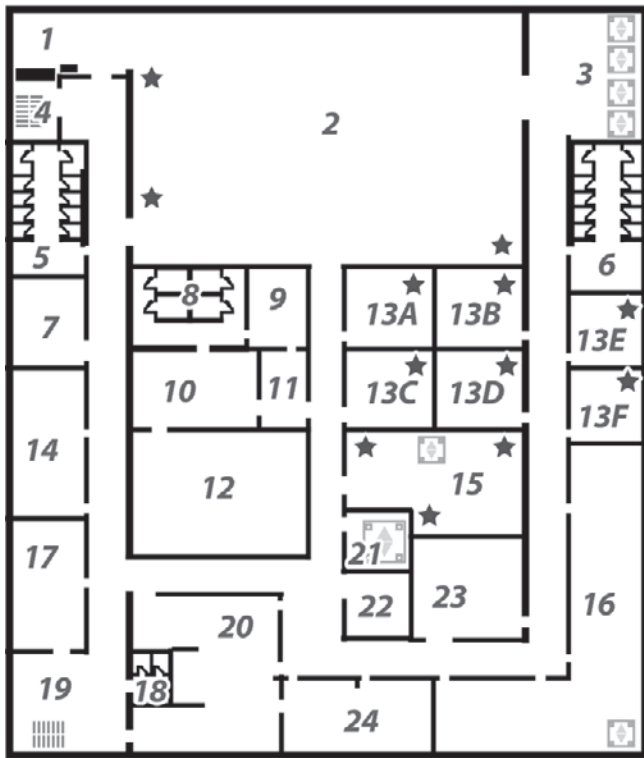
King William Complex Scientist

STR: 6 **DEX:** 6 **END:** 7 **INT:** 12 (+2) **EDU:** 12 (+2) **SOC:** 7

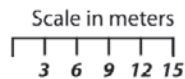
Skills: Admin 2, Computers 2, Gun Combat 0, Investigate 3, Recon 1, Sensors 2, Science Specialty: 3

Equipment: Datapad, some scientific gear

King William Isle Site (Level 2)



Key:



- | | |
|----------------------------------|------------------------------|
| 1 Utility Room (HV) | 13 Isolation Laboratories |
| 2 Workshops | 14 Utility (Power) |
| 3 Elevator Bank/Lounge | 15 Common Lab Area A |
| 4 Stairs | 16 Storage Area |
| 5 Mens Personals | 17 Utility Area (Cryo) |
| 6 Women's Personals | 18 Restroom |
| 7 Utility Room (Water Recycling) | 19 Stairs/SW Lounge |
| 8 Brig | 20 Medical Infirmary |
| 9 Interrogation | 21 Elevator to Level 3 |
| 10 Security Monitoring | 22 Cold Suit/Vacc Suit Check |
| 11 Security Coordinator | 23 Laboratory Equipment Roc |
| 12 Arsenal/Firing Range | 24 Medical Lab |

King William Complex Guards

STR: 12 (+2) **DEX:** 9 (+1) **END:** 8 **INT:** 7 **EDU:** 8 **SOC:** 6

Skills: Athletics (Coordination) 1, Gun Combat (Slug Pistol 2, Slug Rifle 2), Melee (Club 2), Recon 2, Sensors 1

Equipment: Autopistol (3d6-3) and ACR (4d6, Auto 6, Recoil 0) Reinforced Light Armor (AV: 7), three stun grenades. They also have autoinjectors with Combat Drug loaded which can be activated as a free action.

attempting to do so must make a *Computers (Intelligence, +0)* skill check in order to do so after they have gained access to the computers.

Players can also search through the offices (Area 11A-D, Level One) and dormitories (Men's Area 10, Women's Area 12, both on Level One) using a *Recon (Intelligence, +1)* or an *Investigate (Intelligence, -1)* skill check in order to find small pieces of the information listed above in the personal effects of the personnel. Depending on their role at the base, the staff of the facility have access to some of this information. Players can interrogate or question staff members for information if they so choose. **Referee Note:** Keep in mind that the staff will question the presence of the players throughout the base and could alert security if they suspect something is amiss.

Points of Commonality:

Any information the players recover that points to the Precursor Project reveals the identity of the project director, a man named Geoffrey Adams. It appears that Adams is the man in charge of the Precursor Project and players can find information about Adams in the facility's computer systems revealing that he has a doctorate in genetic engineering and is an expert in the field of gene manipulation; very little information is given apart from these facts.

DIGGING DEEPER

Players searching the base for information will find tantalizing evidence of the OSS's wrongdoings, but everything they find points them to the Precursor Project, which is located on level three. It should quickly become clear to the players that they must reach level three to discover the truth behind the project. Cybil Mar, if present with the players, will suggest such a course of action if the players do not.

Level three of the facility can only be reached via the single large elevator located near the center of the base (Area 21, Level Two). Access to level three is restricted to only the most senior staff members of the facility and players will have to acquire one of these key cards or make an **Physical Intrusion (-4)** skill check to re-wire the elevator.

Referee Note: Any time the elevator is used to access the third level, the security staff is notified and will take notice if the players are traveling to the third level; should this happen, the security staff will alert the guards on level three and attempt to apprehend the players.

THE PRECURSOR PROJECT

Using this Material

Once again, the Referee is in a reactive mode, responding to the Character's choices and supplying information. This Act concentrates on the lowest level of the Complex, where the real work of the OSS is performed and where Adams is preparing for his "big operation".

Into the Depths

The following material describes the players journey down into the belly of this particular beast.

*Level three of the facility is a strange blending of human and alien technology. The level is colder than those above and a palpable sense of foreboding settles in over those that travel to this level. The first rooms the players arrive in are a series of labs and airlocks set inside a large cavern; entry into any of these rooms requires an active key card from someone with the appropriate clearance or a **Physical Intrusion** (-2) Check.*

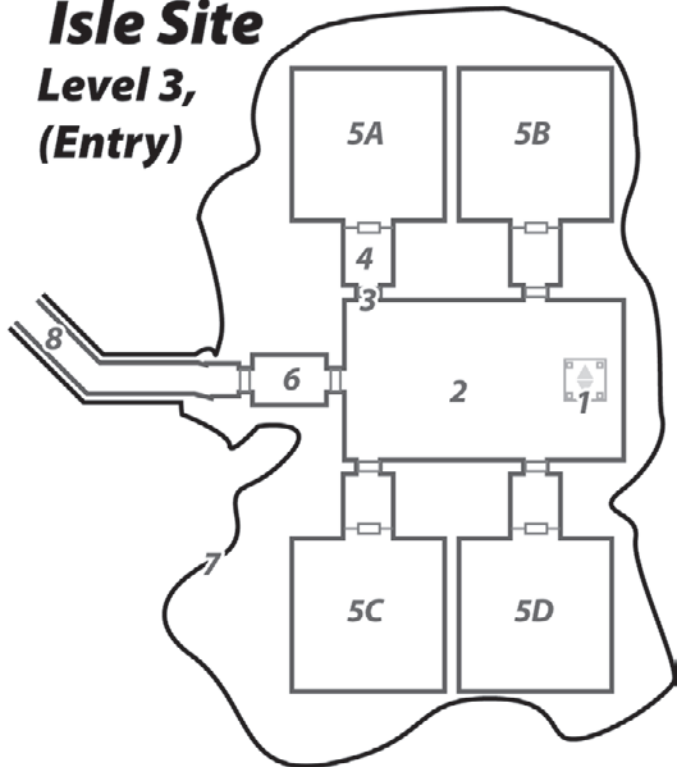
A **marginal success** indicates that the player has either disabled the lock and set off the alarm or disabled the alarm but left the lock intact; the player's choice. A **Marginal Failure** disables the lock and sets off the alarm. A **Failure** simply sets off the alarm.

When the elevator finally settles down, the doors open up into a rectangular room. Marked on one wall are the words "Entry Chamber" in large blue letters.

Airlocks with vacc suits hanging in them lead into four labs connected to the entry chamber, two on either side. The walls of the labs and airlocks are transparent, allowing those within to see into the other adjacent labs and airlocks. Beyond the transparent labs, players can see a large cavern. A single airlock at the end of the entry chamber allows players access further into the facility, through the transparent walls, the players can see that the cavern pinches at that end and continues on as a tunnel.

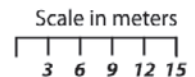
When the players arrive, five lab technicians and scientists are busy at work within the labs at either side of the entry chamber.

King William Isle Site Level 3, (Entry)



Key:

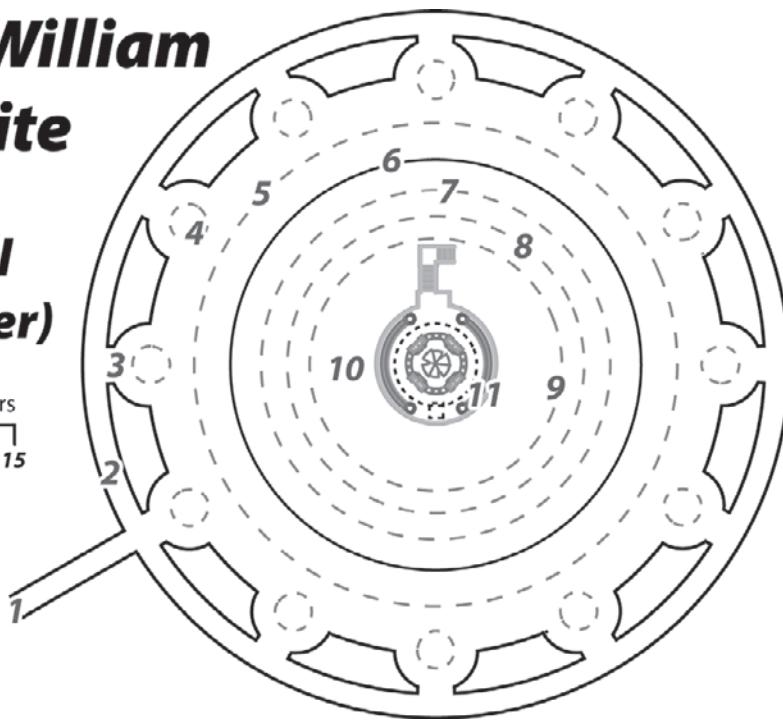
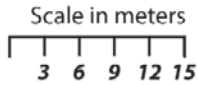
- 1 Elevator
- 2 Entry Chamber
- 3 Airlock Doors
- 4 Airlock (typ)
- 5 Labs
- 6 Airlock into tunnel
- 7 Natural Cavern Walls
- 8 Tunnel



If it is clear the players do not belong in the labs, one of these scientists alerts security immediately; this will trigger an alarm to go off and the base to be locked down. The scientists will not fight the players, instead fleeing deeper into the facility. Players can interrogate one of the scientists to learn the information presented below, which requires a *Persuade* (*Strength or Social Standing*, -2) skill check. Use the statistics for OSS personnel (above) for the scientists.

Players searching these labs will be able to quickly learn what goes on within them. Players can make a *Recon* (*Intelligence*, +1) or an *Investigate* (*Intelligence*, 0) skill check to find evidence of the activities performed within these labs.

King William Isle Site Level 3, (Central Chamber)



Key:

- 1 Passageway to Section 1
- 2 Circular Hallway
- 3 Smaller Chambers
- 4 "Pool" depressions
- 5 1st Tier
- 6 The "Lip" (2nd Tier)
- 7 3rd Tier
- 8 4th Tier
- 9 5th Tier
- 10 Basin
- 11 Platform (see Platform Map)

A **Marginal Success** allows the team to gather up armloads of data, but not sort them out at the time. Ultimately, they will have more than they need, tossing out about 45% of what they scoop up. A **Marginal Failure** is the same, but with more debris and less substance, some 75% ultimately proves to be useless garbage. A **Success** will reveal that the OSS has been experimenting with the alien virus found at the site by splicing their own viral components into the alien virus, creating their own biological weapon.

Analysis

Characters who rate a success during their search can determine the following within 3-18 minutes (a 3d6 roll, a critical success cuts this to a third):

- ▷ It is evident from information found in these labs that the alien virus is believed responsible for the Transformation that took place decades ago, prompting a massive surge in the mutant population of Terra/Sol.
- ▷ It also becomes clear that the OSS has created their own virus to counter the effects of natural mutation, effectively killing mutants. The OSS virus has been weaponized and turned into an aerosol, capable of being spread through the atmosphere. More evidence points to the fact that the OSS has

tested both the alien virus and their own on the children brought in from the orphanages in London; most of these children did not survive the experiments.

Note whether the PC's decide to take one of the Vacc Suits. None of these Vacc Suits are armored, in fact they aren't "true" Vacc Suits at all, but duty suits, the kind that are easier to wear but not particularly good with explosive decompression. Of course, that generally isn't a problem planetside...

THE CENTER OF IT ALL

As the team delves deeper, read them the following:

A single passage leads from the labs through the frozen earth and into the alien ruins buried beneath the surface of the island. The temperature drops to near freezing levels within the ruins and the strange feelings of dread begin to grow stronger as the players make their way into the ruins and the entire structure has a disorienting affect on the human mind.

The ruins themselves are comprised of a series of twelve small chambers branching off from a large circular passageway that surrounds a single, large chamber at its center.

The walls of the passages throughout the ruins curve in very strange ways, bending as they wind

through the complex, adding to the disorientation the players feel as they move through the ruins. Pipes, hoses, wires and tubes – all man-made – lead through the halls and from the small chambers into the large, central chamber.

When the Players stop a short while, or if they examine the weird construction materials closely:

The chambers themselves are cut into the rock at very strange angles with little to no sense of symmetry. The walls of the entire alien complex are made of a bizarre crystalline material that is a translucent light blue... with hints of something...

[Referee Note: staring too long at the walls of the alien-made portion of the complex leads players into believing they see shapes moving beneath the surface of the wall, muted dark shapes twitching and writhing behind the walls.]

Navigation of the Chamber

[Referee Note: Most if not all of the following can be considered description]

The passage from the OSS labs leads into one of the twelve small chambers surrounding the central point of the ruins. Lights have been set by the OSS at regular intervals, providing significant illumination throughout the ruins but giving the entire complex a strange blue glow.

The Small chambers, once entered can be described:

A semicircular(ish) chamber, with a shallow “pool” in the center. Inside the pool is a misty substance that bubbles, the edge of the mist reaches up to a meter beneath the rest of the floor, so the extent of the bottom is unknown.

The chamber also contains various scientific gear (presumably brought in by the OSS) as well as what appear to be panels and consoles set into the walls of each room. The various tubes, pipes and wires leading into these small chambers appear wired into the walls just beneath the consoles and panels. The smooth crystalline blue alien tech and the hard chrome human tech abut one another obscenely.

The “pools” are actually quite shallow, only extending down another meter (thus 2m deep in total). Players closely looking at these small chambers will also see strange panels set into the ceiling of each room.

Players may encounter more scientists moving through the ruins, but these individuals will flee from the players and immediately contact security.

From inside of any of the smaller chambers, they can easily see the central Chamber that they open up to:

The central chamber of the ruins is truly massive, reaching up to nearly ground level, some ten meters. The entire chamber is 50



Part Three: Opening the Door

meters in diameter and sinks another three meters down into the earth. The chamber looks almost like an amphitheater with tiers leading from where the players enter down to the bottom of the chamber.

[Referee Note: The tiers marked with dotted lines indicate .5m inclines, the most significant “drop” is the Second Tier, called the “Lip” because it plunges three meters down].

Various strange symbols and designs have been cut into the walls of the chamber and, like the walls themselves, seem to move if stared at too long. The chamber is well-illuminated by OSS lights and a great deal of human technology has been placed at the center of the chamber.

A small, man-made platform has been created with pipes and hoses leading into its base. On the platform is a man with flaming red hair wearing a vacc suit who matches the description of Director Geoffrey Adams and he is accompanied by two men who are not wearing protective gear but appear at home in the cold.

Confrontation

When the players enter the main chamber, read them the following:

Director Adams and his two companions rise from their work to confront the players. Director Adams’ companions bear a striking similarity to the Takara of Kansas City; they appear as nondescript middle-aged men wearing simple clothing. Both men are bald and, in fact, completely hairless, their lack of eyebrows adding to their bizarre appearance. The intensity of the men’s eyes is immediately disturbing to all who look at them, peering into the observer’s very soul.

As with the Takara, these men possess a strange, otherworldly quality about them that is difficult to place but instantly disturbing. Much of the alien ruins react to psychic powers and these two men are psychic advisors to Director Adams; no record of their identities can be found anywhere.

If they are confronted and the players either make a threatening move or if they are successfully scanned by the Psychic Advisors, Director Adams will immediately become confrontational and hits his autoinjector of combat drug. He says:

- “You’ve arrived too late! The ultimate goal of the Precursor Project will soon be realized.
- “If you surrender yourselves now, you will not be killed. None of the pure humans among you at least.”

Adams is willing to converse with the players, but sharp eyed players (or those familiar with its effects) will notice his eyes start to get glassy and movements seem jerky as the combat drug sets into his system. Knowing that the longer he stalls the closer security forces get to reaching the chamber; Adams having alerted security if they haven’t been already.

Adams is willing to share with the players some of the information regarding the site, revealing more if it is clear the players have already discovered the plans of the OSS. This is actually a plus for him, a chance to show of a little and he is obviously enjoying himself, (you might say ranting):

- This site is evidence! It **proves** an alien influence in present on Terra/Sol! It demonstrates categorically that millions of so-called ‘citizens’ affected by the alien virus are unwitting agents of this influence;
- The OSS has deemed that this unknown threat is too serious to continue. How could they do *otherwise*? The decision was made years ago that once our cleansing virus was operational, it would be released to wipe out this alien influence and ensure the security of Terra/Sol! The galaxy no less!

During this tirade, the Psychic Advisors stand silent, but are ever watchful. They look, if anything, even more strange and inhuman next to this man blathering about ‘alien influence’.

Action

If Cybil Mar is present, she refuses to let Director Adams carry out such a fiendish plot that will result in the deaths of millions; at her first opportunity she will attack the Director, trying to prevent him from activating the alien technology.

When it becomes clear that the players will not go quietly or combat erupts, the Director immediately attempts to activate the alien ruins, injecting the OSS virus into the atmosphere; doing so will take the Director one minute (ten combat rounds).

Even if the Players managed to close up the entryway or otherwise prevent Security from descending upon them, there are enough “random” elements already in the tunnels to combine with the Psychic Advisors and give the players a workout (i.e. don’t let six or seven players mop the floor with just a pair of advisors). Half of these “extras” are Guards, the other half are Base Personnel with the Guard’s sidearms pressed into service (to defend their work if nothing else).

Director Adams

STR: 7 **DEX:** 9 (+1) **END:** 8 **INT:** 13 (+2)
EDU: 14 (+3) **SOC:** 12 (+2)

Skills: Admin 2, Advocate 1, Computers 2, Deception 3, Diplomat 1, Gun Combat (Energy Pistol 2), Investigate 2, Medic 4, Recon 1, Science, Physical/Chemistry 3, Science, Life/Genetics 4, Sensors 1, Stealth 2

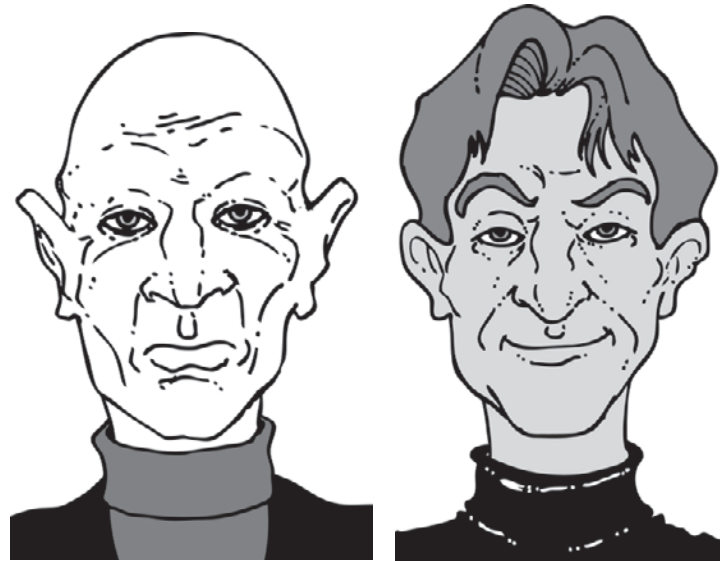
Equipment: Laser Pistol (3d6+3); "Duty Suit" with additional reinforcement (AV: 8). Takes Combat drug

Psychic Advisors

STR: 10 (+1) **DEX:** 10 (+1) **END:** 12 (+2)
INT: 9 (+1) **EDU:** 8 **SOC:** 4 (-1) **PSI:** 10 (+1)

Skills: Athletics (Coordination) 1, Drive 1, Gun Combat (Slug Pistol 2), Melee (Knife 2), Recon 3, Stealth 3, Psi Skills: Awareness 1, Telepathy 3

Equipment: Gauss pistol (3d6, Auto 4, Recoil -1) Reinforced Clothing armor plus natural toughness (AV: 7). Their adrenaline is much like Combat Drug



Psychic Advisor

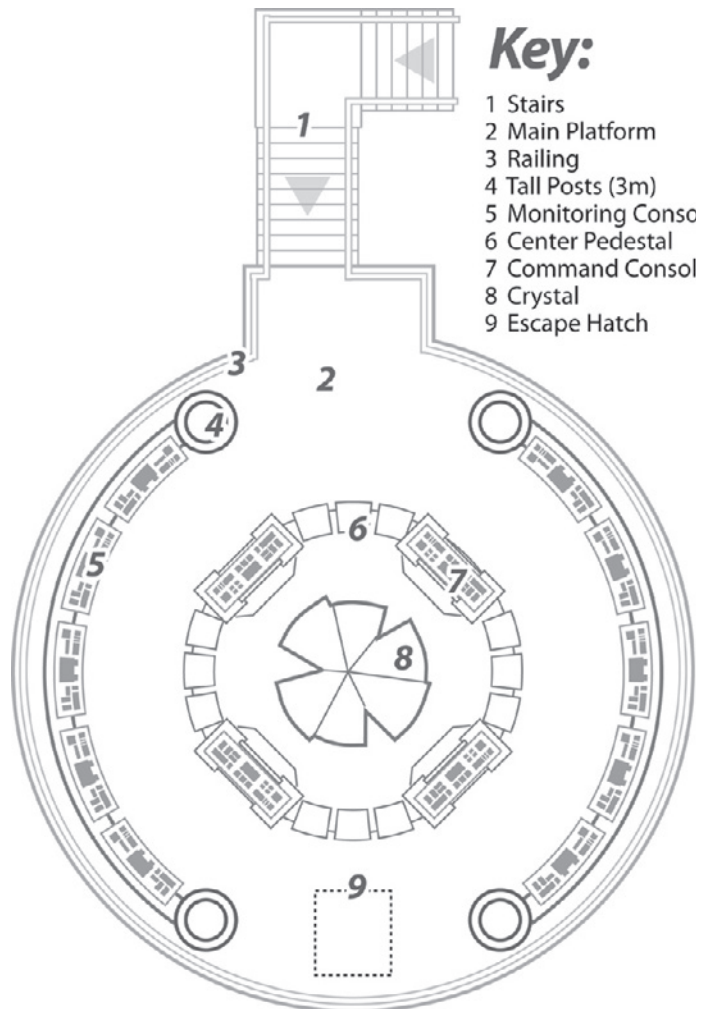
Director Adams

As soon as the Director begins his work, players can make a *Recon (Intelligence, +0)* skill check to hear strange noises, like stone slowly moving, coming from the small chambers as the whole facility begins to shake and hum; if the players return to any of these small chambers, they notice the panels in the ceiling have opened to the surface, revealing the stars above.

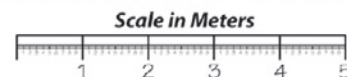
The psychic advisors assisting the Director move to stop the players, using their psychic abilities to great effect. They fight silently yet well-coordinated, supplementing their psychic powers with gauss pistols. Their silence, psychic abilities and almost inhuman physique adds to their otherworldly presence and players will quickly realize that these men are far more than human.

The advisors fight to kill, focusing their efforts on the biggest threat first before switching targets; they do not ask for mercy and, if captured, will not answer any questions instead attempting to kill the players or escape. Failing this, they will appear to die (using their Suspended Animation ability).

Both the Director and the advisors know that (more) security personnel will arrive shortly and that the players will be unable to escape (as opposed to the Director). If the players have not done anything to prevent access to level three and have not eliminated the security personnel at the base, it will take approximately one minute for a security team to reach the ruins.



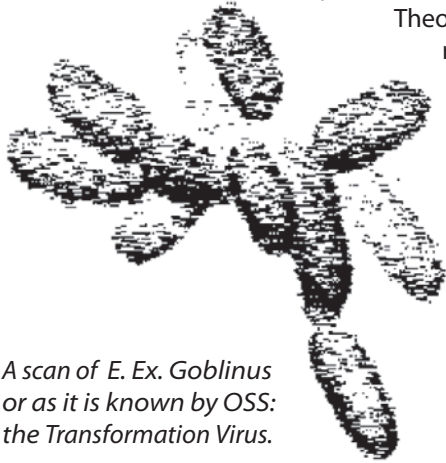
Command Platform



THE TRANSFORMATION VIRUS

Following the discovery of the precursor ruins on King William Island in 2945, the OSS devoted a great deal of resources into unlocking the mysteries surrounding this strange site. Shrouded in secrecy, this research would lead to one of the most significant discoveries on Terra/Sol and set the OSS on a path to genocide. The truth behind these findings is a closely-guarded secret of the OSS who will stop at nothing to ensure it remains hidden from public view.

It wasn't until 2982 that Director Geoffrey Adams was placed in charge of the King William Island site that real progress began unraveling the secrets of the alien ruins. Dubbed the Precursor Project, Director Adams was the first to suggest a correlation between the Transformation of 2856 and the precursor ruins found on King William Island. Long an adherent to the Precursor Theory that Terra/Sol is a construct by alien forces, Director Adams and his research team used his theories as a springboard for their work. They were quite surprised when their hypothesis was confirmed.



A scan of *E. Ex. Goblinus* or as it is known by OSS: the Transformation Virus.

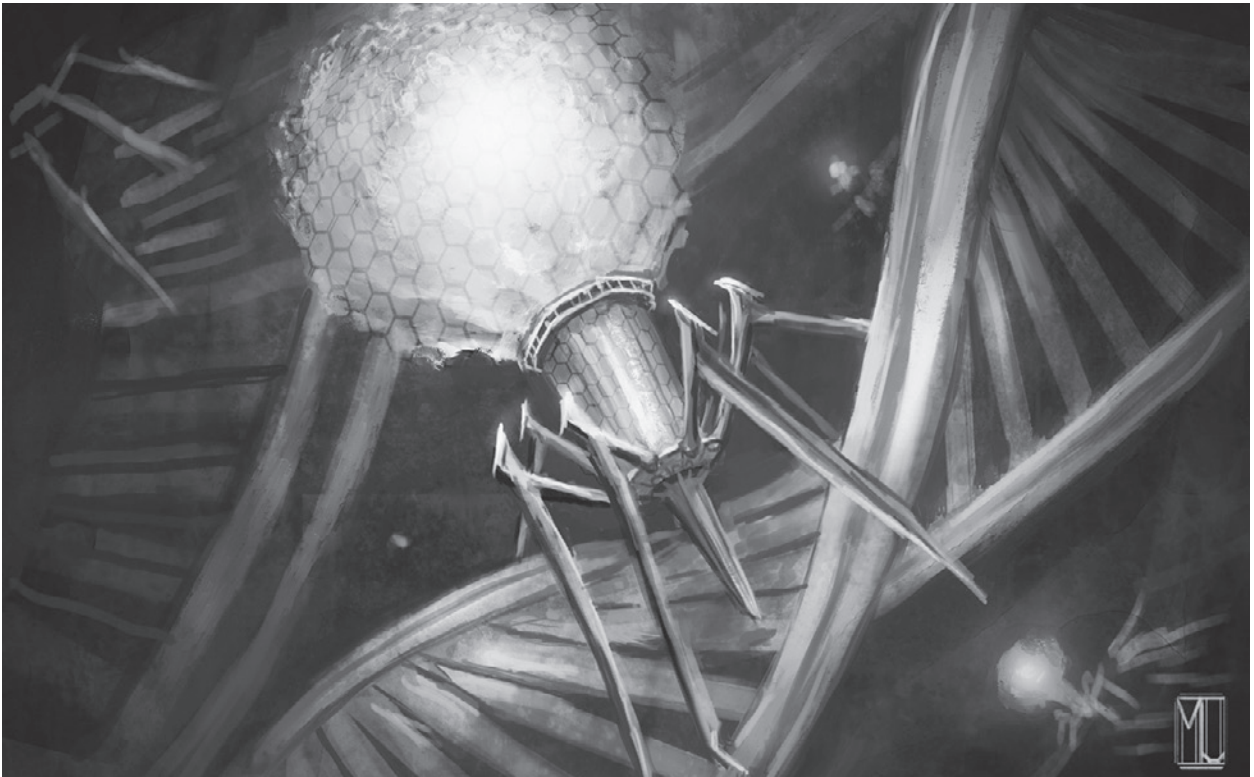
The Precursor Project reported to the OSS in 2984 that the alien ruins did, indeed, represent a delivery system for an engineered virus and posited that numerous such sites existed all over Terra/Sol. Working with the respected Dr. Thaddeus White, Director Adams was able to confirm that this alien virus was responsible for the Transformation – the sudden mutation of a large percentage of the population of Terra/Sol. The news shook the Terra/Sol Division of the OSS to its core and from then on, the virus was referred as the *Transformation Virus* rather than its taxonomic name, (identified as *E. Ex. Goblinus* by Dukette, who thought it to be a naturally virus strand occurring because that fit best into his theory).

For the first time in recorded history, the Orion Security Service had proof that an alien force had directly influenced humankind. Already cautious to the point of paranoia, the OSS began to increase its vigilance and prepare for an imminent alien threat. What little remained of the Terra/Sol Division's ethics and morality was discarded in favor of fear and anger. Most members of the OSS on Terra/Sol were now able to justify their harsh measures under the guise of protecting humanity from an unseen alien threat. At the King William Island site, research continued and began to take a dark turn.

Believing the mutants carrying the Transformation Virus to be the first wave of an alien invasion, the OSS embarked upon a terrible course of action. Word came down from the highest echelons of the Terra/Sol Division that something must be done to preempt any further alien influence. Director Adams was given orders to develop a virus of his own that would reverse the effects of the Transformation Virus and use the precursor ruins to release it into the atmosphere. This would most likely result in the deaths of every mutant native to Terra/Sol, but such are the sacrifices the OSS is willing to make.

The true nature of the Transformation Virus has been all but unraveled by Director Adams and his team. The virus itself appears to have been specifically tailored for humans and results in the gradual and dramatic mutation of those exposed to the virus. Only a small percentage of people experience this change, nearly always during puberty. No trend has been found to explain who will undergo mutation and who will not, but the percentage is much higher than that for standard mutations (nearly ten percent). Though it is thought that the virus itself is no longer active on Terra/Sol, the continued rate of mutation among the population of the planet indicates that the virus is still present and keeping the mutant population at these high levels. One additional effect that has been noted as a result of the Transformation Virus is the unusual nature of many of the mutations suffered by those succumbing to the virus; mutations before unseen and often quite dramatic have been documented among the mutant population on Terra/Sol.

The extent of the alien influence through the Transformation Virus has yet to be seen and the motives of such influence are entirely unknown at this time. This has not prevented the OSS from undertaking severe measures in order to curb this alien threat and only time will tell if their actions are justified.



If Adams is successful:

If Director Adams is successful in releasing the virus, any mutant players are immediately killed as the virus is released; mutant players wearing a vacc suit will not be affected, as long as they are not exposed to the atmosphere.

Once he accomplishes the virus release, Adams begins to smash the control console. If he can smash it (taking three combat rounds) the whole system goes down and there is no way back: mutant life will be extinguished on Terra. There is a secret escape hatch on the platform, but he will only use it if he has successfully triggered the device and smashed the consoles (and then does so quickly).

Should the Director not be able to smash the console, the players could attempt stopping the process. Doing so requires a *Computers (Intelligence, -6)* skill check to gain control. From that point forward it is simply a matter of “pulling switches and levers” (proverbially) until the chamber ceases to function.

[Referee Note: The crystals which the team brought down from Low Orbit are optimizers, they help loft the virus and provide it a safe place to multiply while drifting. Use of the optimizers allows the virus to be spread more quickly and with greater range: without them, he’s only able to kill half the mutants on Terra with a single application.]

Escape with the Truth

The players will need to flee the site following their encounter with Director Adams and his mysterious psychic advisors. The most direct and obvious means of escape is through one of the entrances to the base on level one. Observant players may have noticed the vents open in the small chambers of the alien ruins leading to the surface. Players can attempt an *Athletics: Coordination (Strength, +0)* skill check to climb out these vents and to the surface. On the surface, two pairs of Hellbot drones patrol the area immediately surrounding the base and will attack the players if they are spotted.

When the players reach the surface, the quickest means of escape is to hijack one of the Grav vehicles found in the garage. Cybil Mar is capable of using either of these vehicles and will suggest the players use them to make a quick getaway.

Thankfully, leaving in a OSS Grav Vehicle is much easier than getting inside without one. Their IFF systems must be overridden at the Complex for the automated defense systems of the island to target them. Depending on their escape plan there may be considerable confusion which means no one will make that call. If the players can avoid these defenses, they can escape without pursuit – the OSS at the base lacking the manpower and resources to be able to follow.

EPILOGUE

Depending on the actions of the players at the OSS facility, and after, the outcome for the players can vary greatly. Of chief importance is the release of the OSS virus into the atmosphere.

- ▷ If the players were able to stop Director Adams from releasing the virus, they have prevented the deaths of millions of mutants across Terra/Sol.
- ▷ If Director Adams was left alive and little damage done to the facility or the OSS research, the agency may be able to try again to release the virus in the near future.
- ▷ If the players were unable to stop the Director from releasing the virus, millions of mutants all across the planet suffer painful deaths over the next few days.

Beyond this, there is a coming public relations conflict to fight. It all depends however on what the players have been able to uncover:

- ▷ If the players were simply able to uncover the information in Part Two (by for example not bothering to go to the island or doing so and not gathering any evidence), they will end the use of the orphanages and cause the OSS to come under considerable scrutiny. The Agency will be a focus of intense government and media scrutiny for some time. Eventually, the OSS will be forced to shut down the King William Island Complex, but not before they unleash as much damage as they can to try and destroy the Precursor Artifacts (this will ultimately prove fruitless).
- ▷ If the players were able to recover any of the many sources of evidence from the base indicating the extent of the operations by the OSS and the means by which they were conducting them, these can be taken to any one of a number of media sources for immediate release to the public. This is a meltdown for the OSS in public relations terms.

Thus, depending on the information gained and released by the players, the Campaign could deal a serious blow to the OSS, both on Terra/Sol and throughout the Orion Confederation. If the evidence is enough to damage the OSS, the agency works quickly to squash any and all incriminating information that it can. The OSS will suffer a black eye from the incident and public outcry may result in the closure of the OSS base on King William Island (as discussed above), but the OSS will be able to weather the scandal. The players will have the satisfaction of having participated on it's worst loss ever, but such a monolithic organization proves able to endure even this harsh attention.

For the players' part, they have some significant legal problems ahead of them. Referees are encouraged to alter the aftermath of the campaign based on their own ideas and the actions of the players during the campaign, but the following two are reasonable responses.

If they release the information and run (probably a smart impulse), the Players will succeed as above but remain fugitives in the eyes of the Orion government. Despite their success in bringing the corruption of the OSS to light, the illegal actions of the players are far too severe to overlook publicly. Warrants will be issued for the arrest of the players and Cybil Mar and remain in effect throughout the Orion Confederation. In addition, the players have earned a powerful enemy in the OSS; the agency will be on constant watch for the players and will long remember the actions of the players and the mysterious Cybil Mar.

If on the other hand, the players go to the government first, there might be something done that is more nuanced and less catastrophic for all parties. The Governor himself will become involved in the process, and demonstrate his righteous anger towards both parties. Phrases like "There is a limit even to your power. How dare you!" and "No one should circumvent the law; this kind of vigilantism is the surest road to hell even in our society". In the end, the Governor knows that the players could not have come to him, even had it been possible, beforehand nothing would have been done and the activities of the OSS would have continued. He uses the information as a bargaining chip, exposing some of it to the public (the OSS using orphanages for their recruitments) and allows the public opinion to fester for a few days, then tells the OSS in Koning to disband the Terra/Sol Division or he will release the rest. He also pressures the President to begin to monitor the OSS more closely. The Players illegal activities are expunged from the record in the process, but the OSS will still want to have their revenge.

Cybil Mar can help the players flee Terra/Sol, escaping into the anonymity of the Twilight Sector. After helping them escape any immediate danger of capture, Cybil Mar will bid the players farewell. Cybil knows that the OSS will be looking for her far more than the players and will do what she can to steer the agency away from them. She will disappear into the Twilight Sector, continuing her fight against the malevolent OSS.

PLAYER INSERTS

These are resource materials, use them as such. They have been placed into this section so as not to break the flow of the adventure. They are also designed to provide those readers who are interested the opportunity to delve deeper into the setting of Twilight Sector. They make here to make the adventure better, and are absolutely not required reading. There will be no test. Honest.

Setting Information; Player Handout

REPUBLIC OF THE PLAINS

The Republic of the Plains is the agricultural hub of Terra/Sol with a large percentage of the planet's food coming from this nation. As such, the nation has enjoyed continued financial success and has seen a marked population growth as Orions flock to the ROP to share in the country's wealth. Adding to this economic success are a number of mega-corporations such as SubAtomic that have helped expand the ROP's exports far beyond simple agriculture and the ROP is now also known for its production of large-scale industrial equipment and technology.

Life in the Republic of the Plains can often be described as idyllic and most citizens of the ROP find life an easy one. ROP citizens are hard workers with a strong work ethic but who also embrace the finer things in life, enjoying their time away from their careers. The ROP sports a number of well-known entertainment attractions throughout the country and Orions from all over often travel to the ROP to experience this more relaxed side of the country.

In addition to a strong economy and rich work life, nearly every citizen of the ROP is touched by religion. More than any other nation on Terra/Sol, the ROP has a deep connection to spiritual groups, primarily with their ties to the Mennonite Agricultural Cooperative. In addition to the MAC, the Republic is a center of activity for the Catholic Church under the auspices of the Knights Templar who were exiled from the Terran Union. Finally, a large number of Orions who adhere to the traditions of the American Indians of Earth have immigrated to the ROP and settled throughout the nation. This Indian presence has brought with it the spiritual trappings of this culture and, as such, one can find all manner of medicine lodges and other religious organizations dedicated to spirit worship. This propensity for religious service in the ROP means that religion, in one form or another can be found all across the country and has influenced the lives of nearly every member of the country. Religious holidays of all kinds are observed in the ROP and religious tolerance is paramount. Likewise, the religious beliefs of others are nearly always respected by members of the ROP, be it the pacifism of the Mennonites or the animism of the Indians.

Religious tolerance goes hand-in-hand with an acceptance of mutants within the ROP. In 2856, following the 'Transformation', the Mennonite Agricultural Combine extended an invitation to mutants of all kinds to travel to the ROP and settle there. The ROP government backed this invitation with promises of jobs, support and equal rights for all. The result was an influx of mutants to the ROP seeking refuge from persecution from all over the galaxy. Mutants that had fled to the Orion Confederation sought out Terra/Sol as word spread of the ROP's generosity. As a result, the ROP boasts a larger population of mutants than any other nation on Terra/Sol. Nowhere on Terra/Sol are mutants as accepted as they are in the Republic of the Plains.

Politics in the ROP function surprisingly smoothly for a nation with as much diversity as the Republic. The various political parties are skilled at keeping the focus of their energy on the good of the people and, though political differences and bickering often take place, such squabbles are handled quickly and quietly so the business of governance can continue uninhibited. The people of the ROP trust their government and believe their voice will be heard during elections. To that end, the ROP welcomes the opinion of all of its citizens and is known for its high voter participation. Despite this smooth political system, the ROP has been struggling to balance the influence of corporations on the political process. As the mega-corporations grow within the ROP, their influence over politicians and the general populace has begun to intrude on national policy. The ROP government is working hard to make sure that the corporations do not disrupt politics within the country but must also ensure that the corporations do not leave the ROP for a more amicable nation.

For more information on the Republic of the Plains, see the Twilight Sector Campaign Setting Sourcebook, pages 85-91.

Setting Information; Player Handout

LONDON

The city of London was founded during the first colonization of Terra/Sol. The location quickly became a seat for a great deal of the original colonists and, as with its counterpart on Earth, the city quickly grew into a major metropolitan area and was planned from the early stages to house hundreds of millions of inhabitants someday. While the city's present population is no where near this, the foundations were laid early on and the infrastructure exists (at least in theory). In 2839, the Orion Confederation declared the British Isles of Terra/Sol to be a Confederal Enclave and the seat of the Orion government on Terra/Sol. The result has been the continued growth and success of London and the rest of the Enclave as funds are sent directly from the Orion Confederation government to this ever-important megopolis.

London is a dense urban sprawl and boasts the highest population density of any city on Terra/Sol. Some of the largest buildings on the planet are found in London. As the planetary capital, London also boasts many Orion military installations, the corporate headquarters for a large number of mega-corporations, world-class universities and hospitals and much more. Over half of the population of the city is employed in the Orion government, and the city houses a large population of Orion citizens born outside of Terra/Sol. One is never alone in London and visitors often feel overwhelmed by the sheer size of the city.

Being a Confederal Enclave, visitors and residents of London are subject to harsher restrictions on personal freedoms here than elsewhere on Terra/Sol. Criminal justice is handled by the Orion Confederal Police who are far less lenient than many of the smaller nations on Terra/Sol. The city is home to the Orion Security Service and the Confederate Justice Department as well as housing a contingent of the Orion Armed Forces. These organizations work hard to keep the city free from crime, but being home to a large number of people traveling to and from the city criminal elements have established themselves in London. Despite the harsh restrictions on things like weapons and drugs, a black market thrives in the city and all manner of illicit activity can be found if one digs deep enough.

Many visitors to Terra/Sol reach the planet through London's famed Victoria Central Transport Hub, bringing a large number of foreigners to the city. People from all over the Known Galaxy can be found in London and most Stellar Nations (as well as the old nations of Earth that still cling to the minds of so many) have their own neighborhoods within the city for people 'from their country.' Of course, a more official presence is also present: Embassies from most of the various stellar nations can be found within the city, making it a den of intrigue and espionage. Such is the wonder of Terra/Sol that many nations do whatever they can to uncover the secrets the Orion government is hiding regarding the planet.

As with elsewhere within the Orion Confederation, a vast array of cultures, religions and communities can be found in London. Cultural tolerance is as prevalent in the city as it is within the Orion Confederation and people belonging to any number of different cultures can find others of their kind in the city. Tolerance of mutants is common as well and mutants of all kinds as well as AI's, uplifted animals and others can occasionally be encountered within the city.

Overall, life in the London Confederal Enclave is full of wonder and excitement but not without its challenges.



Organization Information; Player Handout

KANSAS BUREAU OF INVESTIGATIONS (KBI)

The Kansas Bureau of Investigations is a unique organization in that it finds itself at the crossroads of local and national law enforcement, as well as intelligence groups operating throughout the Republic of the Plains. The organization began as a local concern and transitioned in 2979 into a national agency. It has precariously balanced its role between different and often conflicting fellows since its inception in 2840. Though it often faces challenges in day-to-day operations, the KBI is surprisingly competent and organized.

The KBI was initially formed as a branch of the Kansas City Police Department, taking over the investigative aspect of police duties in the new capital of the Republic of the Plains. At the time, the agency was referred to as the Kansas City Bureau of Investigations (KCBI). The KCBI enjoyed success in preventing any significant criminal organizations from taking root in the city and Kansas City remained one of the safest population centers of its size on Terra/Sol. As the galaxy descended into the chaos of the Mutant Uprising in 2881, the KCBI stayed hard at work ensuring the stability of the capital by rooting out criminal anti-mutant organizations and aiding the police department in maintaining order. For Kansas City, as with much of the Orion Confederation, the Mutant Uprising did little to disrupt daily life.

Though the KBI weathered the storm of the Mutant Uprising with ease, the Mutant War following the initial outbreak of violence would result in significant changes on the organization. The KCBI was put to work coordinating with the Orion Security Service to ensure the enemies of the Orion Confederation would not be able to use Kansas City to spy on Terra/Sol. While this cooperation was not without its challenges, the KCBI was able to gain a great deal of experience and training working under the OSS. However, its work with the OSS distracted the KCBI from its everyday duties and, over the course of a few decades, a small number of criminal organizations began to gain influence in the city.

As the war began to wind down, the KCBI was hard at work cleaning up the city. It found that, along with a strong criminal presence in the city, internal corruption within the Kansas City Police Department had grown to alarming levels. In the decades since its creation, the KCBI had rarely been called upon to deal with internal corruption but now it found itself at odds with its parent organization. It was at this time that the government separated the KCBI from the KCPD entirely, dropping the word "City" from the name. The new Kansas Bureau of Investigation (using the designation **KBI**) had autonomy to clean house across the whole ROP. The Bureau made plenty of enemies following this change, arresting dozens of corrupt police and city officials. By the end of 2981, the KBI was on its own and had established itself as a significant force of law and order within Kansas City and the rest of the ROP.



The Official Shield of the Kansas Bureau of Investigations, altered from the original following the shift from a local to national organization in 2979.

In the decade that followed, the newly minted KBI has been busy cleaning up after the war. Though most of the internal corruption within Kansas City has been dealt with, the time spent looking outward has allowed a criminal element to establish itself within the nation's capital. The KBI is hard at work rooting out these groups, focusing their efforts to remove the influence of the Yakuza and other such organizations. They still coordinate with the KCPD, the OSS and other law enforcement agencies, often acting as liaisons between groups that would otherwise have difficulties cooperating.

"Black Files"

Like any organization of its type, the KBI has restricted files buried deep in its archives. The KBI Black Files have however captured the imagination of the public of the people of the Republic of the Plains because of a Tri-vid police drama which has used them as a plot excuse for all sorts of nonsensical adventures.

Setting Information; Player Handout

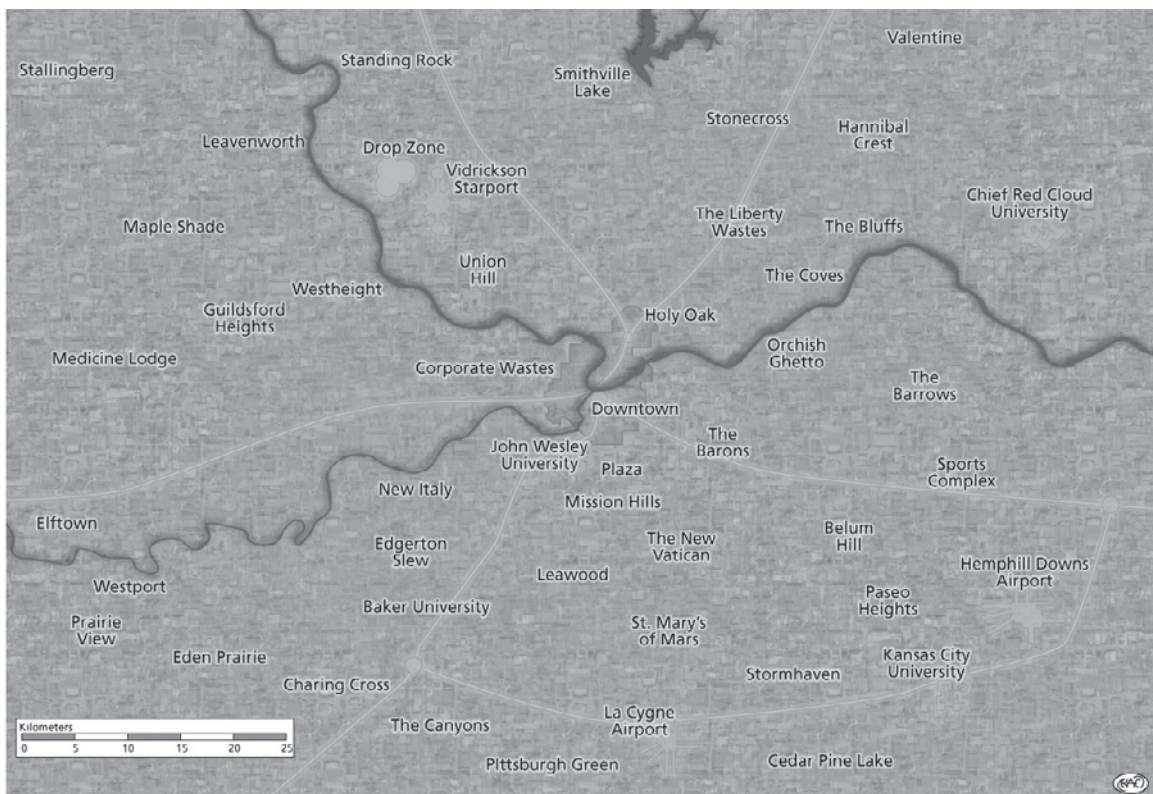
KANSAS CITY

Kansas City epitomizes the Republic of the Plains and is the capital of the nation. Visitors to the ROP can look at Kansas City as a perfect snapshot of the country as a whole and Kansas City is the political, economic and religious center of the ROP. The city boasts the largest population anywhere within the ROP and is a bustling center of activity. Within Kansas City one can find just about anything from grand cathedrals to massive arcologies.

Life in Kansas City is fast-paced and visitors often find the locals overworked, busy and sometimes rude. Rather than being impolite, the people of Kansas City and its surrounding neighborhoods are focused on the business of everyday life, almost to the exclusion of everything else. It's only after the workday ends that they lighten up and allow themselves time to relax and enjoy the fruits of their labor. As a result, the city is a hive of work and business during the day but then quickly transitions into a hub of excitement, fun and energy. The people of Kansas City, Kancitians, work hard but play hard and the nightlife of the city is renowned throughout the ROP.

As a major population center, Kansas City has a well-established infrastructure for those living there as well as visitors. Public transportation is reliable and cheap, and the city can be reached via two major airports, a starport and a number of highways and rivers. The city boasts some of the richest neighborhoods as well as a number of slums. Major attractions include the national capitol building, the SubAtomic and Roark arcologies, the New Vatican and the Orcish Ghetto among others. In addition to a number of industrial centers throughout the city, three major universities as well as a number of smaller colleges make the city a center of higher education and learning.

Crime in Kansas City is always present, but is most often relegated to the more dangerous neighborhoods or to the corporations. Corporate crime has been on the rise and instances of embezzlement, corporate espionage and other 'white collar' crimes have grown in the past two decades. The Kansas City Police Department and the Kansas Bureau of Investigations (KBI) ensures that criminals are quickly found and prosecuted to the fullest extent of the law. Criminals are often incarcerated or exiled to any number of penal colonies found throughout the Orion Confederation; Kansas City has no death penalty.



Player Handout: Beyond the Open Door

THE CLEAN STREETS INITIATIVE:

There is a major vagrancy problem in megapoli like Kansas City, which has led different governmental units to scramble over how to deal with the issue. The Clean Streets Initiative, being pioneered now in Kansas City, is a controversial program, but nevertheless is at least a tentatively legitimate way for the city to ensure that the streets are 'clean' (protestors are having a field-day with that) and the shelters they have constructed to house vagrants (well, now former vagrants) are filled.

They do so using randomized vagrancy roundups to 'collect' up people on the streets of Kansas City. According to their own statistics, one of these 'roundups' is occurring every hour or so somewhere in the city of 43 million. These roundups have turned into riots in places, as massive numbers of Kansas City Police in riot gear force vagrants off of the streets and into special cargo vehicles. The cargo vehicles bring the Vagrants to the nearest designated shelter. There, waiting them are specially-empowered judges who conduct quick and dirty "sentence hearings" for vagrancy. If someone caught in one of these roundups has a job or place of residence, they have the opportunity to speak up and are released. Otherwise, the individual is declared officially to be guilty of 'vagrancy', they are "snagged and tagged" in the parlance of the underclass. This involves consignment to a shelter and fitting with "deterrence measures" to ensure that they stay there or get charged with criminal contempt.

The Deterrence Measure used in the Clean Streets Initiative is a subcutaneous transponder, literally injected under the skin of the vagrant at the neck. At the time of the sentencing, any children that have been picked up are either entered into the care of the state (orphanages) or their parents may bring them into the shelter with them. If the latter is the case, the children are "snagged and tagged" as well. A parent swept up in the raid without their children present must also decide whether to allow the state to take them into their care or to have them sent to the shelter (after being "snagged and tagged") to stay with them. This is a particularly heartwrenching situation that has become the focus of much of the protests, particular the more "emotionally loaded" attacks.

The transponders purpose is to determine when vagrants must be in their shelters, and when they are allowed to leave. It also issues a silent alarm to the authorities if they leave the premises during periods when they are not allowed to do so. For a half-hour before the designated time, the transponder lights to tell them their status (red means they are restricted to the shelter, green they may move out of the shelter, yellow they are soon to be in the red). If vagrants are *not* on the premises of their shelter during their proscribed times (or "shift" as it is known among the residents) there are legal ramifications. The Sheltered individuals have the right to leave during off-shift hours, and are in fact encouraged to get jobs and become "valuable contributors to society" if possible. Businesses are even given a small tax advantages at the end of the year based on the number of such individuals they hire. The subcutaneous transponder isn't particularly difficult to remove, but doing so renders the device inoperable and that causes its own problem (malicious destruction in addition to criminal contempt).

The rationale is simple: If the vagrants were allowed to leave, many of them probably would, and the City would have the same problem it did before. By tagging them with subcutaneous transponders, the city is able to monitor them and ensure compliance. If the residents try to escape, the city knows about it and sends out a Truancy Division Squad (eventually, no rush really). While this system is generating a lot of controversy, especially in those Orion Confederation worlds without population pressures like Terra/Sol, The City government has however received a provisional allowance from both the Confederal Governor and the Planetary Courts to allow this pilot program. They argue that the solution is in the hands of the vagrants and easy: As long as the individual gets a job and a place to live elsewhere, they are dropped from the rolls of the Shelter and the transponders come out. Thus it is not considered a 'punishment', but 'deterrence' for serial vagrants. The courts have been jammed with cases challenging the policy and the program is receiving a lot of political heat, but it has also led to a sharp decline in the number of crimes, at least in the areas where vagrants have been 'swept up' already. This has only made the controversy greater by adding fuel to the opposite side.

One of the problems with the program is that the Shelters have been constructed in out-of-the-way places that are not really where people would *want* to live in the first place. For example, the Spring Street Shelter is constructed underneath the Towers of one of the cities massive reservoir towers, where the water is treated and held for use in the city's water distribution system. Its hot and wet beyond the problems that have been created by the residents themselves. This is not a "desirable" (or safe) location, but then the city owns the land and has the space and building, so it there was ultimately a significant cost savings (hey, efficiency in government).

Organization Information; Player Handout

THE JOSHUA COLONY

The Joshuas are a community of clones based upon the brother and sister pairing Oshi and Mikada Joshua (b. 2112 and 2114 respectively on Earth). They are concentrated in somewhat isolated communities scattered around the Known Galaxy: *Joshua Prime* orbits Earth's Moon; *Joshua Alpha* orbits a moon in the Washington system in the UUP; the third and final Joshua Colony orbits Athena in the Terra/Sol system and is known as *Joshua Beta*. Despite their seeming insularity, the Joshuas have had an impact far outside their tightly knit communities in both secular and religious contexts.

In the first rush to genetically modify humanity, the Joshuas stood out as a community that refused to alter their basic genetics. Perhaps vainly, Oshi and Mikada held themselves up as pristine examples of the human genetic code. This was part and parcel of their decision to create the first Joshua Colony using themselves as the sole templates. Their philosophical choice took on religious and scientific overtones as the Joshua community of cloned descendents began to take shape. The Joshuas described themselves as the last repository of the 'pure human genome'. The scientifically literate would hold this claim to be patently false, pointing to other well-documented examples of humanity that to this day have not undergone genetic modification. But the Joshua siblings' claims were, and remain today as, the loudest. As is so often the case, this admittedly spurious assertion is held with absolute conviction by some, and perhaps more importantly as "common wisdom" by those who have only a passing interest in the subject. It is periodically reinforced by the Joshuas themselves through cunning public relation campaigns. For example: up through 2991, there have been no reported spontaneous mutations in any Joshua (not surprisingly considering they are all clones); the Joshuas hold up this fact to the public as a sign of their purity, and it is taken as gospel by the faithful.



Mikada Joshua, 2142

Interestingly, many who carry other primary religious beliefs also support the Joshuas strongly. While the very existence of a community based repeatedly cloning two individuals has been viewed as eccentric if not downright extreme by a substantial portion of the population, it does lend itself a certain religious appeal for a certain segment of the public. Thus, there are Joshua adherents throughout much of the Known Galaxy who are not themselves Joshuas (and no Joshua 'apostates' have revealed themselves in the long history of this phenomenon). These adherents do not constitute a formal religion, but rather a certain mindset, or perhaps philosophy. They feel that preserving at least one repository of the pure human genome is important in the face of the 'genetic catastrophe.' For the Joshuas and their core believers, this catastrophe is an inevitability so long as man plays at being God and they rely upon that idea to continue being supported by the faithful.

In terms of their internal operation, the Joshuas have supported themselves rather handsomely from the beginning. The original Oshi and Mikada were both geniuses in the engineering field and were at the forefront of the robotic revolution. The enigmatic pair made billions off of their innovations in the design of industrial and domestic robots alike and invested wisely. To this day, Joshua Inc. is a leading robotic manufacturer whose designs are still considered both cutting edge and desirable. A Joshua Automaton

(they consider 'robots' the creation of others) is highly a sought-after commodity in the marketplace, many are considered practically as works of art.

The Joshuas have not however limited themselves to robotic engineering in terms of their professional development. Like any savvy organization, diversification of interests is considered crucial to long-term viability. As just one noteworthy example, Individual Joshuas have traded on their good looks and sought out careers in various media positions such as like actors or journalists; Careers from which they might have a great deal of influence on public opinion. In this capacity, a Joshua might be found in many parts of human space pursuing a career for decades before returning to a Joshua colony (which they all inevitably do). As a

group, the Joshuas also support a wide variety of scientific expeditions throughout human space and their patronage is highly sought after in the scientific community because of the lavish endowments and significant autonomy that come with them.

A peculiarity of the Joshuas is their personal and private lives. In particular their sex lives. Or perhaps their stated lack thereof. As far as is known, Joshua clones never marry outsiders. Indeed, they do 'consort' with them 'after a fashion' either (despite lurid claims sometimes surfacing in tabloid vids). The Joshuas insist that they only reproduce themselves through asexual reproduction: in other words, cloning. It is rumored that some governments and other organizations have placed a large bounty for the delivery of a Joshua/ non-Joshua cross. A related urban legend says that Joshuas have sometimes gone missing, the victims of kidnapping by unknown persons or groups seeking a peek at their genetic code for nefarious purposes. Thus, many Joshuas wandering outside of their communities have learned to arm themselves and/or seek out heavy security to stay protected and maintain their purity. Most simply limit their exposure outside of their tight knit communities in the first place.

As widespread as they are, mysteries concerning the Joshua's abound; What is known for certain is that they are a controversial and enigmatic group that is enormously wealthy. They actively promote themselves as the last examples

of unsullied humanity and have become a lightning rod for outside groups with similar mindsets and goals in "preserving" humanity from its own scientific excesses. They currently number somewhere around 120,000 individuals concentrated into the three isolated communities (Joshua Prime, Joshua Alpha and Joshua Beta) as well as a "handful" of perhaps several hundred scattered throughout the Known Galaxy.

Real Cloning versus Tri-Vid Cloning

On the lower end of Tri-vid, Clones are all carbon copies of one another, but in reality that is not quite the case. While genetics plays a role in so much of who and what we are, there are certain developmental processes that take place as far back as the womb which have a dramatic effect as well. The use of exo-wombs to carry the Clones does not ensure that the flow of hormones and other vital chemistry is steady, quite the contrary. Exo-Womb technology, while well-perfected on some levels is still considered more of an art than a science, and the delicate balance of chemistry in "the mix" is hardly uniform. Although a well-maintained exo-womb in the hands of an expert can be better than many a "natbirth" in terms of fetal development and health. Still, the Clones come out somewhere far closer in appearance and behavior than normal siblings, and yet they are definitely not the armies of exact duplicates of the tri-vid. Add to this the various paths which lives take when we leave the womb and the Joshuas are not cheap imitations of the original pair but a living and unique community which has merely taken a divergent road.



Oshi Joshua, 2142

Organization Information; Player Handout

OSS (ORION STATE SECURITY)

The OSS grew out of the chaos of the War for Independence. Its founding in 2758 actually predates the independence of the Orion Confederation, making it the oldest governmental agency in the Confederation. The colonies that would later form the Orion Confederation suffered greatly at the hands of the UN Peacekeepers. The disjointed coordination between the various colonies made it easy for the UN to put out the brush fires that pretty much were the War for Independence. Those pushing for independence in Orion space saw the problem and knew that without the resources or unity to form a cohesive fighting force they needed to approach the problem from a different direction. So instead they opted for creating a top notch intelligence agency. With superior intelligence they would be able to move around the small military forces at their disposal and to decide which colonies should agitate and which should stand down because UN forces were on the way. In his way they could make the rebellion more effective.

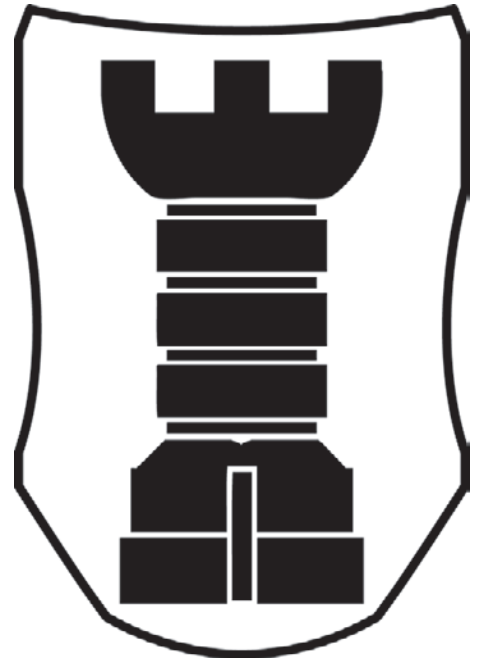
The original name of this agency was **the Castle**, because when it was first formed it was housed in a large mansion on Koning that resembled a castle. Because Koning was occupied by the UN at different points during the War for Independence The Castle itself had to remain a secret. It spent the better part of the war establishing itself as one of the premier caterers in Sirius, the capital city of Koning. Indeed, it was one of the few that would cater UN functions. Its original director was **Isabella Valkristenbom**. She was a master chef who also possessed great interpersonal skills. A statue of her stands outside the Castle, which is still used by the agency (albeit no longer as its headquarters). Isabella, little known to most historians, was one of the greatest heroes of the revolution. She made great sacrifices for the cause and to this day, some of her exploits are still classified.

The Orion's are a fiercely independent lot and have an abiding mistrust of governments. Thus, they have always had a love hate relationship with the OSS. After independence was won, many in the Orion House of Equals sought to hamstring the agency, but every President of the Confederation – no matter what stance they had taken towards the OSS prior to coming to office – have always become supporters and protectors of the **Castle** (no longer an official title, it is still used as a designation within government circles). Conspiracy theorists of course have had a field day with this fact. The most common claim is that the OSS has managed to get some dirt on every President, thus forcing each to support them. This hardly seems likely, but the urban legend is popular with the man on the street.

A more likely scenario is that once a President comes to office he realizes the immense task that of presiding over the thousands upon thousands of "states" that makes up the Confederation. Quickly coming to terms with his or her need to have accurate intelligence about what is going on in each "state" they shift there stance. Thus, the reality is that the OSS allows the government to be able to keep a lid on the powder keg that is the Orion Confederation. The dirty little secret is that the OSS must spy on their own people to provide the President with any chance at all of keeping order within the Confederacy. Few inside the government like to talk about this, few outside are willing to do so openly.

The OSS has experienced a number of "institutional moments" during its existence. Things that have shaped the culture and outlook of the institution and been handed down from one generation of OSS agents to the next. From the time of their formation, they cultivated a sense of secrecy and esprit de corps; valuable tradecraft lessons from clashes with their counterparts; perhaps though none of these "moments" have had – and still has – the power of the 25 year campaign on Sologne during the Mutant War.

This was a war unlike any the Orion military had ever experienced. It was a war of attrition, with the APR forces seeking to bleed the Orion's and sap their will. The APR used everything in their bag of dirty tricks



The symbol used by the OSS in Public Relations Campaigns.



Psychic Advisors

In recent years there have been a number of sightings of strange operatives of the OSS working alongside other OSS agents in the field. Research into these mysterious individuals has uncovered little as to their origin or purpose, but it appears as though these individuals are universally powerful psychics with significant psionic abilities. As such, they are dangerous to say the least and it appears as though the OSS uses them as a new weapon in their operations.

Conspiracy theorists have a wide array of ideas as to the origins of these strange beings, ranging from engineered mutants to aliens working with the OSS. Whatever their true nature, these psychic advisors have reached a level of infamy along the lines of vampires and other mythical creatures.

Despite this 'popularity', encounters with these individuals are always unusual to say the least though few remember ever meeting one. Instead tales are told of strange run-ins with bald, pale humans bearing an intense stare through bizarre eyes and an air of the unknown. Most people dismiss these as fictional creations designed for drama. Few that actually encounter these mysterious individuals are ever the same afterwards.

on Sologne, and invented more in the process. Mutants transformed beyond recognition, psychic soldiers and whispered rumors of horrors "beyond the kin of mortal men". These horrors have, like so much else, taken their place among the urban legends and now so far removed from the truth fact and fiction are hard to distinguish from each other.

The most popular legends are that the Archenars used precursor artifacts which killed a soldier or drove them to madness. Another even more far fetched but still earnestly supported by some rumor is that the APR actually used aliens to bolster their defense of the planet. If the truth is known, it is buried deep in the vaults of the OSS.

When the military struggled to deal with the situation on Sologne, the OSS was called in. They formed small units headed by combat experienced agents to deal with these irregular units fielded by the APR. It was a unique role for the agency to become involved with, and the horrors they found there shaped them significantly. The details about any specific action may not be fully known to anyone outside of the highest echelons of the agency, but it is clear that it was during this campaign that the OSS came to a have a deep hatred for all things APR. A loathing above and beyond the normal sort of rivalries between Stellar Nations. A hatred whose depth is hard to plumb even to this day.

Public Relations:

Since the OSS first began operating "openly" (in as much as any kind of organization such as the OSS does this), they have been very savvy about using the media and public relations to their benefit.

This includes actively encouraging entertainment producers to utilize their name and image as long as the good wins out over the evil in the end and the agency itself is not tarnished by their depictions. The effects of this effort have, when combined with selective "leaks" of information, been very interesting to study from a sociological perspective.

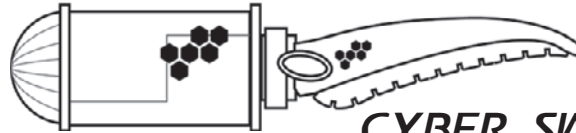
Internal Operation:

Beyond the material presented here, there is little or no information which the agency has released to the public regarding their internal makeup, their decision-making style or tables of organization. Often different depictions of the agency (see Public Relations above) have treated these issues in a completely different (and wildly contradictory) fashion.

Technology Information; Player Handout

Shown, Right: a swarm canister mounted an APR "Spudmasher" used to heave the weighty tube a greater distance. It is not required for use.

Also shown at extreme right is the universal warning symbol used for nanotech devices.



CYBER SWARM

Walking down a London street you hear a distinctive clink, clink, clink sound behind you. Turning to look you hone in on the source of the sound: A metal tube approximately 6" long and a couple inches in diameter is maybe a yard away now rolling on the ferrocrete. A distinctive symbol is pulsing on the side of the tube. Just as you resist this, you hear a sharp pop as the "ball" end of the tube disintegrates. You run. Fast.

Nanotechnology was once touted as the next great technology in warfare as well as everything else. Humanity would be able to construct and program these tiny gnat sized or smaller robots to perform a host of functions, everything from cyber-fabrication to cellular surgery so killing people would be a snap right? The reality however has so far failed to live up to the hype. Cyber swarms were first used during the Cyber War in 2582. Rushed into service, experts quickly realized that the projected gestalt "intelligence capabilities" of these devices had been grossly overestimated. Able to follow a few simple protocols (like correlate size with an attack function) they were unable to distinguish friend from foe. These early models self destruct commands either did not exist or often failed to initialize. The result was widespread destruction well beyond the intended targets. These were truly terror weapons and it took years for the last traces of the swarms from the Cyber War to be cleansed from Earth.

Today, cyber swarms perform many functions like fabrication of simple items like steel beams in space or clearing blocked arteries in a human patient. But the ability to think, or to adapt to unprogrammed situations, continues to elude engineers. It has been suggested that cyber swarms are a 'thousand year technology', meaning it may take a millennium or more to perfect their use. In the meantime though humanity uses these devices in a number of ways but most prominently through militarily applications. Many regard them as the "nuclear threat" of the 30th century and a spirit of détente pervades: don't use them lest you want them used on you.

1-ton Cyber Swarm

Power Supply: Solar Cell

Type: Flying

Endurance: 30 (1 d-ton)

Movement: 9/18 meters

Damage: 2d6

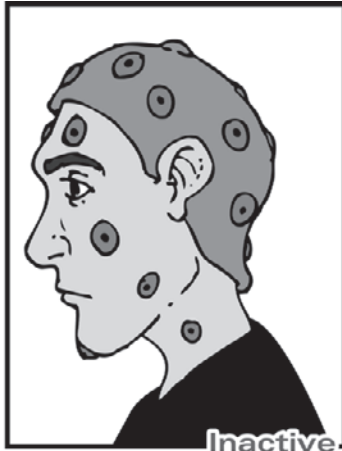
Skills: Fly 1, Recon 1

Game mechanics: Cyber swarms are not treated like robots in game terms, although technically they are robots. They are given a number of endurance points based on swarm density, once these endurance points are reduced to zero the swarm is no longer effective and is ignored from a game play standpoint. They fly at a speed of 9m unless they are not attacking, at which time they move 18m until they envelop their target. The swarm damages everything it envelops automatically, and all damage is done first in the round *after* the swarm settles. That means that if a swarm settles on someone, they can start running at full speed (24+ effect of *Athletics*) and possibly get out of it. Of course, since it is not attacking, the swarm also moves at a faster rate.

Degradation: Cyber swarms have significant Endurance stats (the swarm shown here is a small canister version; 1 dton of H² in size, thus two 5x5 foot squares). The most effective means of avoiding damage is to evacuate the area or get behind a sealed barrier. Unsealed armor is useless, sealed armor is considered unsealed after d3 rounds of exposure. As the size of the swarm is reduced, the damage they cause is also reduced. Use one-half (15 remaining END in the above example) and one-quarter (6 remaining END) as benchmarks, reducing damage appropriately (2d6 to d6 to d3 using the above example).

Defense: The best way to combat a cyber swarm is to use an EMP (Electro Magnetic Pulse). This will completely disrupt the swarm (as well as everything else unshielded). Shielding swarms themselves is impossible because of their size and the manner in which they operate. Concussion grenades, flame and similar broad area-effect weapons will cause full damage to the swarm. The least effective means is to use projectile weapons (which do a single point of damage per four rounds expended). Laser weapons do slightly better, burning out the motors of swarm members and ionizing the air. They do 2 points of damage per (single) hit. Also particularly effective is the low-tech expedient of simply swatting them: using a club does 1d6 END damage to a full strength Swarm (30 Endurance), this is reduced to a d3 when the Swarm's Endurance drops below 15 due to the increased spread (degradation cuts both ways). Blunt objects work better obviously than swords or other sharp objects, turning the blade to mash the swarm with the flat surface never seems to work as well as it ought (d3 damage, -2 DM to the roll).

ADVANCED DISGUISE TECHNOLOGY



A Holonet Demonstration

Disguise technology has expanded by leaps and bounds in the 30th Century, offering a wide variety of possibilities. Two of the most common and versatile elements of this technology are *Holonets* and *Fauxmasks*. Each has their own unique advantages and drawbacks.

Holonets

Holonets, which involve using holographic technology to build a face of light around their own but are relatively limited in use and subject to some problems with countermeasures.

This technology is highly illegal in most Stellar Nations (including the Orion Confederation), not because of any inherent danger, but because the only reason one might want to use the tech generally involves mayhem of some sort. Tiny sensors are placed in a "mist" solution that is applied to the face. These sensors, once they are covered over the area, capture changes in expression and movement. A "skullcap" is then placed over the hair and individual holoprojectors are fitted onto the face at key points to provide the image. The specialized computer that is built into the skullcap projects an image over the individual's face that will easily fool any simple visual inspection. Beyond this however, for example a "pat down" or even deep densiometer scan, they are less useful. A similar form of technology can be used for voice adaptation, similar to the "squawk box" used by Uplifts for human speech.

Game Mechanics

In terms of mechanics, this technology does not so much grant the disguise skill as it facilitates its use. It is also a good way to get past cursory exams without any checks at all. The emitter technology (which is shielded) goes through a continuous tug-of-war with detection technology, but emitters are usually on the losing side at the cutting edge. If confronted with efforts to jam, block or disrupt, compare the Tech Levels of the two, and use that as the DM. Treat this as a standard skill roll (i.e. looking for 8+ with the DM based on tech and any other situational modifiers the Referee feels is appropriate -- range, effectiveness etc.).

FauxMask

Fauxmask technology moulds pseudo-skin to the face and hands and can duplicate specific individuals. Fauxmasks first use compression technology to minimize the contours of the disguisers own face as much as possible. This is a key to their success, but also the drawbacks of this technique. A specialized device (approximately the size of a suitcase) builds layer upon layer of pseudo-skin based on a scan of the individual to be copied and requires a high resolution 3D scan or the individual to be copied to be present (although Fauxmasks are also useful for non-impersonation disguises which generally do not require compression). This technique achieves a more natural appearance, which can resist even limited tactile examination. Two drawbacks are a lack of comfort and a more limited range of disguises based on the basic contours of the face.

Game Mechanic: The discomfort due to the compression technology causes a -1 DM to all conscious actions after 10-60 minutes of use, -2 DM after 1-6 hours of use (maximum usage: 8 hours); these modifiers are based on a combination of pain and muscle tension in the face and hands cannot be controlled pharmaceutically because they have to remain flexible. The mask can be removed by the use of a special spray or by tearing it away in chunks (either of which eliminates the negative DM immediately, but the tearing does require an action). *Note: if the Fauxmask is not being used to duplicate a specific individual, the compression does not need to be a limiting factor; masks still dry out and crack over time and are only good for a maximum of 8 hours.* There is also a functional limitation: Some people simply cannot duplicate specific faces due to size or bone structure. The Referee should first determine if it is even feasible then, make a d6 check: On a 1-3; Yes, the face may be copied. On a 4: Sort of, close but not accurate, the mask can only fool people at a distance. On a 5-6: No, the face may not be copied.

PART ONE:

HONOR BOUND

What the Players should know...

A series of mysterious disappearances and brutal slayings has hit the streets of Kansas City, the capital of the Republic of the Plains. These have become known by the somewhat misleading moniker “**Yamaguchi Ripper**” because the first batch of these abductions all happened within Yamaguchi. Another half dozen however have happened since then in the surrounding city districts. Over the past four weeks nearly a dozen people have gone missing and even more have been found gruesomely butchered and dumped (either in whole or in nearly unrecognizable parts) around area waste heaps and other forgotten places: the assaults are fast, with little or no witnesses, and they often leave an orgy of violence in their wake.

The facts of individual cases however vary widely enough to give pause, and some Kancitians have even gone so far as to discount the ‘Yamaguchi Ripper’ entirely. These detractors claim that what is taken as a “pattern” is merely separate examples of normal violence that are bound to occur in cities the size of the Metro Kansas City area. They say: ‘Gruesome murders happen in crowded cities – it doesn’t have to be a conspiracy.’

But there are enough nagging similarities between individual cases that fear has spread into a veritable citywide panic. This panic is actually exacerbated by the paucity of information. There are so few actual eyewitnesses and no video footage of these events has been released by the Kansas City Police Department. Rumors have begun to spread, claiming that mutants are involved (common enough a claim that it is looked at somewhat dubiously), and that there are even more cases that are either unreported or under reported.

Nothing has been discovered that links the victims and no clues as to the identity of the perpetrator have been uncovered by the authorities, who remain very tight-lipped about the situation. Even the underworld is on edge, as they, too, are uncertain who is responsible for these crimes.

PART TWO:

LONDON CALLING

The Scrap

INCOMING TRANSMISSION

16511-6545118-396998636

re-routing antenna

41515-9852-4548

Transmission Recieved

Director,

Per our transmission last week, I am apprising you of the final stages of the project.

Chemical analysis is good.

Suitable containers have been fashioned.

Early prognosis of Dr. Chase is that the specifications you established will either be met or superceded. The only question on our end is how many staff will be needed down the gravity well for monitoring purposes.

This phase of project is otherwise ready-to-go.

MATERIALS WILL BE READY FOR PICKUP ON
SEPTEMBER 15TH AT 6 A.M. GMT.

Please note revised schedule for rendezvous.

As you well know, it is vital that the materials are brought down the gravity well at the proper time for maximum effect. Given the date I was ordered to meet in our last realtime meeting, I planned the final harvesting of the medium.

However, I noticed that that time window is six hours earlier than the time mentioned in your General Mission Briefing of yesterday morning (See mass communication FINAL MISSION BRIEFING). If this does not correspond to your current operations, please advise.

FASTOV OUT

Wiley's Notes, Informational Handout

Basic Data: The following clues can be gained by analyzing Wiley's notes.

- ▷ The murders have been far more widespread than reported, and stretch back well before the Yamaguchi Ripper became public knowledge. They also include a variety of other, under or unreported abductions that number at least into the mid-60s. He states, purely as conjecture, that the further this thing goes back (he's just charted a six-month frame where he can get data from) the figures mount up quickly.
- ▷ The police seem baffled and hobbled at the same time in their investigations. The evidence that Wiley has unraveled does not directly confirm that this is deliberate, it could well be an artifact of the pressure to solve these crimes and the natural inclination of the police to seek the simplest answer to their current (political) dilemma. There are names in the notes of Officers that have been vocal about this inside of the force and many have been sidelined (either before the notes were given to Rosen or subsequently).
- ▷ A ghost of a Netpilot friend from the War named *Shadowborn* was helping Wiley, but this ally has since been destroyed by a nasty Cyber attack that came seemingly out of nowhere. Shadowborn revealed that the Video System has been compromised quite deliberately by someone using a backdoor into the KCPD system and a sophisticated viral attack program to temporarily shut down and lock out the video feed in selected areas. Shadowborn was trying to find out more about these issues when he was murdered.
- ▷ Either by design or by accident (no proof either way), the Oriental District seems to always blink out whenever there are outages elsewhere. Also, the Oriental District is the place most prone to ongoing problems with their video system. This suggests that it may simply be a problem in that part of the system that the virus makes worse. Of course, it could also be by design. This led Wiley to try and draw some connections with the information he had and the Oriental district.

Additional Data: Referees *may* choose to dole out the information below:

Several unreliable witnesses (most of whom are vagrants) reported that the Yamaguchi Ripper incidents are being conducted by people who appear to be either "oriental" (in their words), "mutants" or both. There is however a lot of really 'bad data' here as well – inconsistencies and some outright bizarreness (one individual claimed that they saw a woman with a tentacle coming out of her mouth, another claims they saw something flying over the city on leathery wings, most of these accounts Wiley recorded but dismissed).

A weird Coda was added to the files, apparently part of a blind email sent from someone who only signed it "C.M.": it includes some low-resolution images of people being hustled into vehicles. The Vehicle numbers match some of those in the police reports, all of which were found abandoned in random sections of the city. The images reveal little about the culprits, face recognition software is useless when they are covered up as they are in the photos. But the fact that these images exist *somewhere* is a mystery in and of itself and triggers a good deal of paranoia by Wiley.

The name 'Takara' appears more than once Wiley heard it, wrote it down but made no connections. He did ask Amanda about it however

In several places, the compiled data seems to make one neighborhood in Yamaguchi city stand out, a place called Little Pakxe (pronounced Pack-SAY).

Yamaguchi City Material:

The Video feeds from this neighborhood are among the worst even in the spotty Yamaguchi City District.

A woman named Takeo Batchai was questioned by police regarding the disappearance of one of the victims. While the details are sketchy, apparently the officer in question (who has since been relocated) thought enough to bring her into the local station for questioning. Ms. Batchai lives in Little Pakxe and her occupation is listed as 'waitress' in the police report. The report originally listed the restaurant where she worked, but this was redacted at some point and Wiley could not recover the data. Privacy laws prevented Wiley from tracing her through the tax records or Employment Bureau and often Waitresses like her work multiple jobs.

The belongings of another murder victim were pawned by a street thug named Ito (who was cleared of the murder by an ironclad alibi – he was in custody at the time) at a shop called 24-Hour Pawn in Little Pakxe of the Yamaguchi City District. This was offered to Wiley by one of the officers in which he was in contact.

One of the missing persons was last seen at the Yummy Dragon Restaurant in Little Pakxe. This was not the only such connection, after all every one of the victims was last seen somewhere, but Wiley noted it in his handwritten records as it had to do with Little Pakxe.



PREGENERATED CHARACTERS

Below are the stats for the pre-generated characters mentioned in the Setting Chapter

Baker

Uplifted Simian, Army/Infantry 3 (rk3, Lance Sergeant), Drifter/Scavenger 1 (rk1 Scavenger)

STR 14 (+2)
DEX 10 (+1)
END 15 (+3)
INT 7
EDU 6
SOC 1 (-2)

Skills: Athletics (Coordination) 2, Drive 0, Gun Combat (Slug Rifle) 1, Energy Pistol 1, Heavy Weapons 0, Mechanic 0, Melee (Unarmed) 3, Recon 4, Stealth 3, Streetwise 1, Survival 0, Vacc Suit 1, Zero-G 1

Equipment: Armored clothing (AV: 5), Advanced Combat Rifle (3d6, Auto: 6, Recoil 0) w/ permit*; 10,000 cr, 1 Ship Share, Ally

Edward Foster

Centennial, Agent/Law Enforcement (rk5, Chief) Citizen/Colonist (rk 3 Settler)

STR 6
DEX 6
END 7
INT 10 (+1)
EDU 12 (+2)
SOC 9 (+1)

Skills: Admin 1, Advocate 1, Computers 2, Gun Combat (Slug Pistol 2), Investigate 4, Jack of all Trades 3, Melee (Club) 1, Persuade 2, Streetwise 2

Equipment: Gauss Autopistol (3d6, Auto 4, -1 Recoil) w/ permit*, Cloth Armor (AV: 5), Stun batons (d6, 2d6 stun); 40,000 cr. (4,000cr in liquid assets), 2 Ship Shares

Lu Chongun

Merchant/Free Trader 3 (rk2), Rogue/Enforcer 3 (rk 3)

STR 9 (+1)
DEX 10 (+1)
END 9 (+1)
INT 7
EDU 7
SOC 6

Skills: Athletics (Coordination) 1, Broker 0, Carouse 0, Computers 1, Comm 0, Deception 1, Drive (Wheeled), Engineer 0, Explosives 0, Flyer (Grav) 1, Gun Combat (Slug Pistol) 2, (Slug Rifle) 1, Investigate 1, Melee (Blade) 2, Persuade 2, Recon 2, Stealth 2, Steward 0, Streetwise 2, Vacc Suit 1, Zero-G 0,

Equipment: MagRail Pistol (3d6+2, Recoil 0) w/ permit*, Blade (2d6), Armored clothing (AV: 5); Residence in Kansas City, 60,000cr, Enemy

Nelli Drake

Artist/Performer 1, Psion Adept 2 (Initiate rk 2), Wild Talent 4 (Witch, rk3)

STR 4 (-1)
DEX 9 (+1)
END 7
INT 12 (+2)
EDU 7
SOC 7
PSI 13 (+2)

Skills: Art 0, Athletics (Co-ordination) 1, Carouse 0, Computer 0, Deception 1, Gun Combat (Energy Pistol) 1, Investigate 0, Life Sciences (Psionology) 1, Persuade 2, Recon 0, Sensors 0, Social Science (Psychology) 1, Stealth 2, Steward 0, Streetwise 2, Telepathy 2, Telekinesis 2

Equipment: Cloth Armor (Av: 5), Stunner (2d6+3 Stun); Residence in Kansas City, 10,000 Cr., 2 Ship Shares. 2 Enemies, 2 Contacts

Diogenes

AI

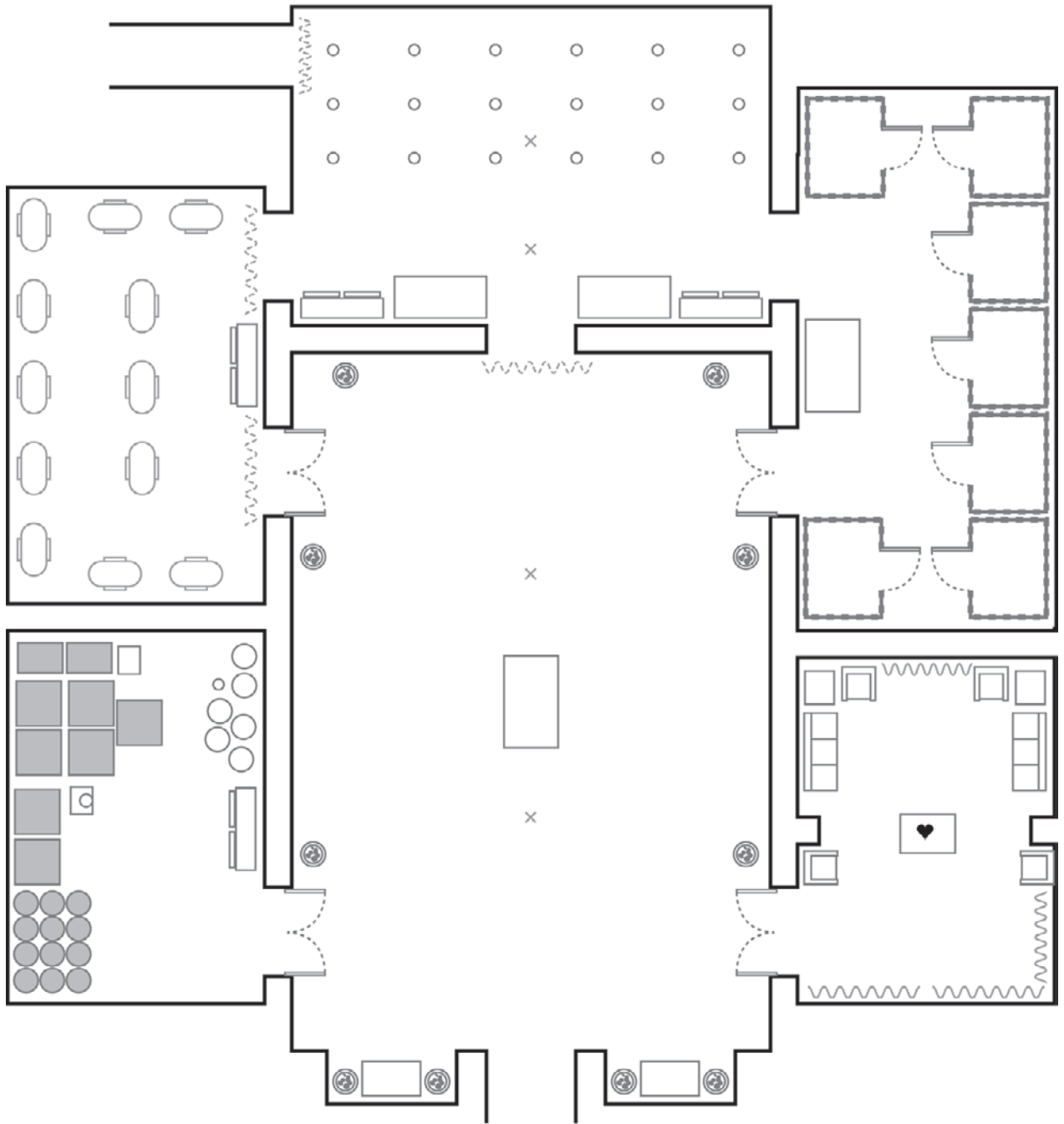
STR 9 (+1)
DEX 9 (+1)
END 9 (+1)
INT 12 (+2)
EDU 12 (+2)
SOC 6 0

Skills: Comms 1, Computers 3, Engineer (Electronics) 2, Gun Combat 0, Investigate 2, Mechanic 0, Physical Sciences (Mathematics) 2, Recon 1, Sensors 1, Space Sciences (Cybernetics) 1

Equipment: Subdermal Armor (Av: 3), TL 14 Neural Comm, TL 14 Wafer Jack, Enhanced Vision. Stunner (2d6+3 Stun), Cybernetics & Electronics kit; 100,000 cr

Notes:

- ▷ Players are free to spend the credits listed with each character on the sheet within guidelines set by the Referee.
- ▷ Several characters have permits for their weapons. These permits allow for possession and transportation in regulated containers, not use.
- ▷ Lu Chongun and Nelli Drake both have residences in the city. Allow those characters to determine where they live and the basic character of the residence.



scale in meters
1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9

TRUST HIM WITH YOUR PLANET?



NEITHER DID WE

*Expand your perspective on the Twilight Sector Setting with **Beyond the Open Door**.
A trio of adventures designed to illuminate the world of Twilight Sector as well as entertain.
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